

*The Desert
and the Rose*

Edith Nicholl Ellison



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THE DESERT AND THE ROSE

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The DESERT and the ROSE

BY

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Author of

THE HUMAN TOUCH, ETC.



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THE DESERT AND THE ROSE

NO MORE

Old homes left lonely 'neath a lonely moon,
Peopled with silent guests each named No More:
Familiar faces lost to us, or flown
Over the River to the Unknown Shore:
Things dear, things human, unforgotten hours:
Dawn on the peaks, songs in the midnight trees:
Eve's brooding breast or noontide's storming
showers,
Fragrance of Summer and the deep drone of bees.

Say not No More! Use any words but these!
Fool us with phantoms, cheat us and depart—
Say not No More! For none of Fate's decrees
Harsher than this e'er wring man's helpless
heart:
Death, merciless or kind, our birthright is:
Not in such melancholy haunting of our door
See we life's saddest ghosts: not in this
Lurks the incomparable pang we call No More!

FOREWORD

THESE jottings from the journal of a ranchwoman in New Mexico bear date several years removed from the present, therefore may appear at first glance out of date. That such is not the case soon becomes self evident. Comparatively few amendments are needed to bring them up to date. Climate, ranching methods and so forth are not susceptible to drastic changes, even when abetted by a Farm Bureau, an Agricultural College, farm clubs of sorts and other aids to the agriculturist.

The writer came to the dry and sunny climate of Southern New Mexico for the benefit of an almost lifelong rheumatic disorder, and soon after reaching her destination decided that the Mesilla Valley was the appointed spot. She purchased a good ranch in that fertile Valley, some forty miles north of El Paso, Texas. Unfamiliar with the methods of farming under irrigation, she yet contrived by ceaseless mental rather than severe physical application, above all by taking thought for the morrow, not merely to avoid loss but to realize annually a fair amount on her investment—enough, that is, to make a tolerable record for a healthseeker unfit for hard labor, and a tenderfoot into the bargain.

All this happened before the building of the Elephant Butte Dam, the nucleus of the Rio Grande Reclamation project undertaken by the Government, but the cost of which is ultimately settled by the ranching population of the Rio Grande Valley

above and below El Paso. Statistics in regard to the Dam and its works, together with masses of information appertaining thereto, are widely circulated and suffice for their purpose. Though by no means the largest irrigation project in the world, as claimed for it by those ignorant of the huge and long established undertakings in distant lands, the Elephant Butte Dam is entitled to rank among the greatest of modern achievements.

The writer has been urged to set forth the successes and failures of the Rio Grande project. Such a task is obviously not to be considered. Allusion will be made in the proper places to present and past conditions compared one with the other, but the following pages aim to represent little beyond the personal experiences of a practical ranchwoman, advertise nothing, and endeavor to steer clear of more or less acrimonious discussion. The skilled and industrious rancher made money in the Valley long ere the Rio Grande project came into existence and his like continues to do so, only more of it owing to a regulated water supply. The farming person the world over must be a manager, not only a worker. Unfortunately the combination is not as common as it should be.

One comment may be permitted, as a matter of justice and in the interest of the farmer, namely this: had old residents—thoroughly acquainted as they necessarily are with soil, climate and the vagaries of the Great River—been consulted, some costly blunders and not a little sore feeling would have been avoided.

Last but not least: let not any person imagine that he can pick some cap and fit it to any Valley dweller's head, for of this joy he is deprived. In this book neither caps nor heads are found to match.

CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF THE TENDERFOOT

AS OUR train trailed up the Mesilla Valley from El Paso there came into view alfalfa fields, orchards, vineyards, trees, homes palpably inhabited by "white folks." In short, the vaunted attractions of the Valley were actually materializing.

After we had alighted at the little station the prospect continued to please. It was midwinter, so the earth was arrayed in shades of drab and brown, but over all was the radiant high altitude sky, and in the centre of the town the twin crimson domes of the Catholic church; and there was mistletoe on the cottonwoods, its berries pearl white against a background of sapphire, and none to warn the future ranchwoman of its evil nature and its sins. Beyond towered the awful steeps of the Organ Mountains, their jagged spires and pinnacles casting sharp yet aerial shadows in the rarefied atmosphere of nearly four thousand feet above sea level.

I shall continue to use the term awful steeps in regard to our beloved Organs despite the fact that they are only a paltry ten thousand feet or so above the sea, an elevation disdained by certain other New Mexican mountains. But there is a great deal in appearances, whatever may be adduced to the contrary. Contour, for example, counts for much and in this respect these shining organ pipes piercing

the high sky are unique. Moreover, it is generally conceded that Southern New Mexico and Arizona can display the finest atmospheric effects on the continent; also that for every gain in scenic grandeur northward bound just so much is lost in color.

Unimaginative indeed must that newcomer be who can roam around this section of country, if only bent on ranch hunting, without absorbing something of its romantic history or being impressed by the picturesqueness of his surroundings. Years have slid by since the marvel alone of desert sunrises, sunsets and afterglows was first beheld, yet the primal glory holds us yet in thrall. In winter and early spring are all these at their best. Many an evening may we watch, bewildered, the sunset south, east and west; wherever we turn there it is to confront us—a riot of color flinging itself up and across the indescribably tender blue of the high sky, a blue that defies description or imitation. They linger long, these passionate rainbow hues,—spreading tentacles of splendor, indefinable cloudlets edged with rose—a pageant evidently not intended for mere mortal vision, but part of the always detached, immortal scenery in which by chance we find place. And perhaps this is as it should be, for the majority of human beings pay it slight heed. The hotel supper has started, and to that important function all but ourselves have fled. And when at length we follow, we return later to behold a transparent rosy veil drawn across the wide heavens through which the star of evening shines undimmed.

One day we climb the eastern mesa and pass

through the Mexican town. To this day it has not materially altered. Each of the mud-dauber's nests called home has a corral attached, fenced about with wattled sticks, as often by the *fouquiera* which breaks in spring into gorgeous scarlet blossoms, or sometimes by a mud wall. Everywhere live creatures are roped according to the Mexican manner, although the roping of the errant hen until her duty for the day is performed is not seen in New as in Old Mexico. Four posts stuck in the ground, a roof of brush on which the corn crop is piled, walls, if any, made of wattled sticks—such are the inexpensive and by no means to be despised barns still common in this section, made possible by the short, usually dry winters, and desirable in view of the high cost of lumber. Such barns combine the advantages of warmth and ventilation, and if reinforced with adobe mud suffice even for blooded stock after they are acclimated.

Here in the Mexican quarter signs of content and cheer greet our eyes. The merciless aridity of the land above the Valley is coaxed by many a flower loving señora into producing oases of bloom, fenced against the incursions of goats, cows and burros. Even in this winter season notes of color run through the browns and drabs like the notes of a boy's soprano above the deep voiced choir. And everywhere bobbing along the levels, appearing and disappearing, is the ubiquitous Mexican Hat—in later days doomed alas! to permanent disappearance.

From the eastern mesa the beauty of the Valley—

the Rio Grande smitten by the sunlight gleaming here and there its length along—lies beneath us, a Vale of Promise, protected by the western mesa and far mountain ranges. Behind us rise the Organs, rich in ore. In the centre of the Valley picture crouches the town, boasting at this date only a few of the brick buildings, including so-called bungalows, in which those who prefer Progress to Comfort may be as uncomfortable as they please. A mile or two to the southward we see the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, already equipped with an experiment station, although destined to a larger and more far-reaching future.

In another place the cultivation of this fruitful Vale since prehistoric times will be spoken of more in detail. Its later history is concerned with its struggle for civilized settlement, beginning about 1825 and subsiding into tranquillity some time in the 1880's, when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad was completed. Las Cruces has well earned its name of The Crosses. In days not so long past cross after cross dotted the soil, marking the spots where each in his turn American or Mexican settler succumbed to the tomahawk of the Apache, and long after my first acquaintance with the Valley one large cross in front of the Catholic church bore the inscription TO THE UNKNOWN DEAD. Haciendas, or fortified dwellings, still exist, each built around a *patio*, its outer windows missing or inconspicuous, and in one wall a great arched gateway for the admission of wagons when Apaches were a perpetual menace. A drive down

THE ORGAN MOUNTAINS



the Valley leads us past a projecting butte from the shelter of which bands of savages leaped time and again upon the stage coach following the long trail from California, often murdering driver and passengers, leaving the terrified horses to swing the bloodstained vehicle on to Las Cruces or Mesilla. In after years mine was the privilege of meeting again and again two Apaches—"Government Pets," as the Oldest Inhabitant somewhat bitterly styled this type of Indian—boys from the Reservation. All I can say is that if, so far as appearances went, these chips of the old block resembled the block, then the tales I have been told of the raiding of ranches in the Valley were very far from overdrawn. After thus anathematizing the Apache it is but just to recur to the records of Government folly, and worse, which were to some extent responsible for western massacres. "This wasteful and bloody war," writes Mr. Bancroft, alluding to that waged with the notorious Apache chief, Victorio, "was the result of the corrupt policy of the United States Government and the greed of the white settler." Neither is there anything original in the assertion that military leaders proved themselves alone competent to deal at once equitably and firmly with the Indians. "'Tis an old tale and often told," that of ill informed civilians abrogating to themselves knowledge and wisdom possessed only by those on the spot—namely, the soldiers. Many a nameless trooper in days of Indian raids offered his life freely in defence of the helpless, even as "unhonored and unsung" nameless thousands of-

fered theirs during the great world war.

No long term of years, therefore, had elapsed on my first settling in the Valley since the Apaches had made life frightful for its inhabitants, protected though the Valley was by two army posts. In another place it will be told from whence this tribal nation obtained its frightfulness. Neither was the Mexican, bred up in mortal terror as he was of the Apache, an entirely collected and reliable person. When full of red wine occasions arose—nay, still arise—on which his feelings were too many for him. Ponies are scarce and feed high in these later days, or no doubt he would still on Saturday nights be racing in dozens instead of in twos and threes along the country roads, screeching, and maybe firing a six shooter into empty air. An innocuous method of blowing off superfluous emotions, it may be said, so long as sheriff or deputy prefers not to hear him, but it robs the householder of the sleep of peace. But there was a time when the youthful peon was not quite such a harmless idiot; for the first thing a Mexican of the least intelligent variety does when scared or excited is to shoot, and this unpleasant habit often got him into trouble with his more wily and self-controlled Indian kinsman.

Nevertheless it is the Indian in the Mexican which preserves in him, not only his picturesque qualities but others more desirable yet. To this subject allusion will be made later. Our first powerful impression of the Indian touch was received one Sunday afternoon when without warning we came on a scene seething with a primeval something that

stirred the blood. It was a Mexican horse race. The animals provided for this then favorite pastime—still popular but not so easy of attainment—were graded and therefore lending grace and beauty to the wild scene. The road was lined with vehicles, *caballeros*, pedestrians—both races represented, every white or brown face tense with excitement. The Mexican jockeys were bare footed and bare headed, their swarthy locks bound Indian wise, white cotton shirts and drawers their racing attire. The frantic steeds reared and plunged, their riders sticking to them like centaurs; for the horses were neither saddled nor blanketed, and the bridles were just hair ropes looped around the muzzles.

A shot was fired, and amid the yells of the crowd away they went, vanishing in a storm of dust, while we sank back with ejaculations of delight.

“That was *fine!*”

It was.

The Mexican inherits from the ages a certain supple quality of limbs and body, and provided he is anything of a horseman is in his element on the back of a horse, although for ornamental purposes he prefers the splendor of silver mounted saddle and tasselled bridle. You are in high favor with him when he presents you with a beautifully braided bridle. The Far Western American, generally speaking, is more or less helpless when deprived of his cumbrous and weighty saddle in which he sits as in a deep chair. Probably he has never rounded up a steer in his life, yet he adopts the cowboy equipment and the cowboy style of riding—both

seemly and necessary in their place but altogether ludicrous when acquired by the plain citizen. When affected by women it is in very truth worse than grotesque!

Indians were sequestered in reservations and raids things of the past when the home question for this writer was finally decided. Not only so, but it can be proved that for many, many years existence in Southern New Mexico has been more peaceful, serene and secure than in many an eastern community, and this despite occasional alarms in recent times of border raids—alarms which so far have never materialized. And what was it that decided the home question? Must it be confessed that it was not wholly the rich if neglected land, the fruit trees in bearing, a magnificent cottonwood spreading sheltering arms over a spacious, solidly built adobe dwelling, the admirable possibilities of the ranch from a farming point of view that turned the scales? What was it, then?

An attractive drive bordered with china, poplar and paradise trees, rose bushes before the door—and bounding the horizon, a perpetual yet variable vision of beauty, the soaring heights of the Organ Mountains. Poor reasoning this, no doubt, for a prospective farmer, and yet not without its proven worth.

Many contingencies, otherwise unbearable, if there be such a word in Life's merciless dictionary, can be endured when the eyes may be lifted to the Eternal Hills.

CHAPTER II

THE GRADUATION OF THE TENDER-FOOT

IT IS a truism to remark that what a man learns before he makes his home in a given section and what he learns afterward are wide as the poles asunder and none could realize this more profoundly than one who journeyed from New York to make a home in a far country. For the first few years every year finds the alert person still learning, views and opinions constantly widening and becoming more worth while. Therefore when settled inhabitants read or hear of some author tarrying with us for a few weeks for the purpose of "writing up the country," quiet smiles have been known to give place to yells of derision.

If the farmer works his own land with the aid possibly of a growing son or two, thus dispensing with hired labor, his sky should be as unclouded as that of any farming person here below—only more so. Even that question of hired labor (until these war days) need not be overwhelming; but the Mexican laborer will be attended to later. At least the farm hand in New Mexico brings his dinner pail with him, and the farmer's wife is not overburdened with cooking for outsiders. Not only so but provided she be in good health and accustomed to work, and has no young babies, she may carry on a profitable egg and butter business, attend to her

house and still have leisure for "social advantages." All the better for her if she is not besieged by predilections other than social. She has her buggy or even motorcar, and as compared with her prototype in the east she should not be overworked. A Mexican woman for the washing and heaviest drudgery is not a rare visitant in the ranch home. As for the children—the eastern mother soon learns a salutary lesson. The independence of the wee New Mexican-born tots is in marked contrast with the helplessness of the nurse-or-mother-herded flock further east or west. Take a New Mexican child by the hand and lead him or her round? Not on your life! Either sex is amply able to proceed without accident to school or elsewhere along country roads or automobile infested streets. Tiny mites below school age may often be seen "out on their own." So it goes with the children. One may be driving, and behold rushing upon buggy or car comes an apparently runaway steed, riderless at that. Not at all. As the wild animal approaches a little boy, or possibly two such midgets, comes into view on its back, urging or controlling at his own good pleasure. Exceptions to the rule of juvenile independence there are, of course, but they are exceptions.

And yet for the Tenderfoot there must always be a first day, a nightmare of a day, when the contention with novel conditions begins. Recollections of certain forlorn hours, when too disheartened to appreciate the uniqueness, the artistic values, of my environment I inwardly lay down and died, enable me to sympathize with the fledgling Tender-

foot—unless he be robust and surrounded by a family. On him or her I do not squander pity. Nor in all the present up-to-dateness is compassion really obligatory.

But when a woman is far from robust, has an embarrassing (yet occasionally cheering) diversity of tastes, looks after her own ranch, has periodic calamities in her home which often necessitate night as well as day work, existence has its wearing side. Every variety of live stock must receive personal supervision if it is to prosper. Stock cannot be abandoned to the untender mercies of Mexican help, although as will be told there *are* Mexicans who prove themselves infinitely more trustworthy than Americans in this respect—and in some others too.

And in addition to these trifles there was—nay is often to this day where the older and usually more reliable peon is concerned—the language to be reckoned with. Ah, if it were a language! But it is not. It is a patois. Frantic appeals are made to Spanish dictionaries and grammars but to discover that in cases too numerous to mention the Spanish and the Mexican word have scarcely even a blood relationship. Then out of window go those exasperating volumes, and the stranger in a strange land, settling into a strange home, must banish more important concerns from the harassed mind and gather up stray weeds of Mexican speech from the wayside—finding them after all sufficient for the daily round. A simple receipt for fluency seems to be the following: Sit down hard somewhere near the tail end of every sentence and bawl. Or, as was

once pithily remarked: Shout in scallops, and swallow the lower point of every scallop.

As for neighbors—they are helpful or the reverse. In my earliest tenderfoot days I had one uncommonly gifted; she had commonsense. To her I flew for advice—not on farming matters, for with those she troubled herself no whit, but when other problems yet more vital pressed for wise solution. When she said: If I were you I would do thus or so, her suggestion presented itself at once as the one right thing to do, and a load rolled from my overburdened shoulders. Such persons are rare as well as priceless friends, and when they fail to live out their allotted span the world is left the poorer for their departure. There is such a thing as seeing too much of both sides, and these good counsellors hold the balance true; each one revolves around his or her axis, never straying away to investigate the axes of other individuals or speculating as to how these axes may look to them, yet viewing quite enough for their own particular good and for ours—for us, who see altogether too much.

And so we come to the weightiest of all matters for the Tenderfoot—the selection of competent advisers. For in the times of which I write the Farm Bureau and other like aids to ranchers had no existence. On the whole, however, practical experience, intelligently applied, is hardly to be surpassed in value.

I was mercifully preserved from the loss and pain incurred by many newcomers to the Arid Belt, who are satisfied that they know it all. Farmer or

no, the Tenderfoot has it all to learn. From the outset of my ranching career I have cherished two quite inconspicuous virtues: first, I do know what I don't know, and thus protected hasten to sit at the feet of some accredited Gamaliel: second, I have cultivated the habit of close observation while appearing to observe nothing. The individual whose agricultural belongings, animate and inanimate, are in sorry plight may talk "all he has a mind to" without affecting me in the faintest degree. By his fruits do I know him—or her. For information, therefore, I hied me to those who had made good in the departments wherein I needed counsel, and the empty chatter of the failures beat on my ears as the crackling of thorns under a pot.

Some eager advisers remind me of a man I stumbled on not long since in a city garden. He was telling the lady of the garden how to tend her flowers and while thus engaged was permitting a full head of water from the hose to drown her delicate seedlings. So is it well to take note of the ranchman offering counsel, to mark well his ways and what manner of man he be.

Some of the most helpful advice I ever received was given me by a woman who even in "bad years" never failed to make her ranch pay. She was too busily engaged in working to make it pay to join the "curb-warmers" on the street.

For reasons, then, alleged earlier I stood calm and unafraid whilst, during the setting out of a peach orchard, a neighbor notoriously unsuccessful drew rein at my fence more than once for the purpose of

assuring me raucously that them peach trees wa'n't a-goin' to do no good in that there soil and that I'd best listen to advice. It happened that both the variety of peach and the corner of land had been selected for me by a moneys making orchardist, and that the two year old trees were being planted according to his directions, in large holes twenty-one or more feet apart to allow for the diameter of the twelve or eighteen feet often attained by three year old trees in the Valley. Two men held each tree while a third spread the roots, the hole being afterward filled with fine soil. My neighbor looked on derisively, and when the orchard was set and in process of being irrigated, he shouted as he struck his horse with the quirt and loped upon his way—

"All right! Go ahead! River's goin' dry this summer, and you'll see what you will see in that there land!"

What I saw was a thrifty orchard passing gallantly through a perilous season of drought and coming into bearing the following year. Other young orchards were wholly or in part lost, but mine flourished because the advice of an expert had been asked and taken. Constant cultivation was the preaching—dry farming, in short.

After the retreat of one calamity howler another arrived to inform me that I should never, no never, find a market for a small orchard. Thanks to the ranchwoman before mentioned I did find a market, and a good one.

So much for advice. Next in order comes the education of a weather eye. Nature makes mock

daily of the dull and blind, and every locality hangs out signs of its own, for us to read or pass by as we will. Naturally there occur seasons when Nature flouts even the keenest observer, but not often.

Certain Tenderfooters who land in our midst with more cash than sense, bragging that they will show the Valley farmers how to do things, may be dismissed with few words. Sooner or later they shake the dust of our rich Vale from feet which naturally enough have never lost their tenderness, swearing that farming in this section is No Good. Or else, merely wearying of an avocation for which they are unfitted, conduct themselves like children who abandon a toy as soon as it has lost its novelty. The good ranching person, even as the good physician, must be born as well as made.

And it is not just the backward look, the days that are no more look, that shows the hours of blessing to exceed in number, or at least equal, the hours of banning.

Worry? Of course! Exasperation, poignant anxiety? Assuredly. Nevertheless the born ranching person *sticks* until removed by ironhanded circumstance.

And after all ranching provocation arrives intermittently, owing its presence, in the era before the Dam, largely to the scuffle for water. The labor problem, needless to say, was comparatively easy of solution in those days before a brief period of war drained the labor supply.

CHAPTER III

THE RISE OF THE YEAR

IN NEW MEXICO early in February the alfalfa is greening here and there, and is not quite so crackly under the feet. But it is still too crackly for Cortes. The pads of Chihuahua dogs are tender, and like the wise little old man he is he takes a seat on the edge of the irrigating ditch and watches me wistfully on my passage up the ranch. Jealousy also agitates his snowy shirt bosom because lazy Betsinda, ever on the lookout for indulgences, has approached me in her most engaging manner, with the result that I am carrying her. That Cortes considers such a performance absolutely despicable makes no difference in his feelings; or that never does he consent to being borne aloft unless when crossing a crowded street, and even at that he sighs woefully. Betsinda's manners are admired of all beholders, and it is she who attends to the social end of their existence—coquettishly, and assisted by the lavish use of large melting orbs, and always with that air of nerves-on-the-jump characteristic of the truebred Chihuahua.

Despite a mitigating quality or two February can scarcely be called a softening month; in fact the Oldest Inhabitant believes it to be the most unpleasant month of the New Mexican year. For the rheumatically inclined it surely is. A chill damp breeze

from south or east frequently annoys, rain or snow drape the mountains and sometimes descend on the valleys. The typical winter of this section is dry and sunny; or if not, why the presence of health-seekers and tourists? December may be cold enough to freeze water in open vessels nights—outdoors, that is—and occasionally waterpipes. Nevertheless robust visitors from sterner climes laugh at well wrapped residents, and are inclined to parade in the sunshine without overcoats. Every travelled person, however, knows that to lay down the law about any climate is nothing but a tempting of the high gods, who disarrange weather schedules to suit themselves. Dare to make an assertion, and promptly the weather gods slap you in the face. February is the one exception; it is pretty safe to assert that it is shifty and unreliable. And the birds may be counted on. The yellow breasted, fat lark we have always with us, whistling optimistically every day; and now brilliant blue patches appear on bare boughs, on fence posts, or attached—bunches of them—to pump or faucet, and the full water pail is encircled with a sapphire ring; and anyone who ever notices anything exclaims: "The bluebirds are back! Soon we shall have Spring!" Glossy blackbirds too, handsome fellows flashing with scarlet or orange, swoop down upon the winter wheat, screaming about irrigation being delayed, and brown woodpeckers, also touched up with scarlet or orange, are quarrelsome and restless, and somewhat unintelligent, as it seems to a mere human person. Why, for instance, do they drum on the

metal sides of the water tank, which of a surety can supply them with no meaty nourishment; or glare at each other from either side of a post of dressed lumber, which is also lacking in nourishing qualities, once in a while catching the other fellow a smack over the head, an assault returned with interest? But all these winged things are mere heralds of the gorgeous red and orange and amber gentlemen still on their way to us, and are on a par with tentative bulb fingers poking upward through the drab earth, with nascent buds on bushes and such wee signs and signatures of the uprising year. And just now the amateur gardener who defied prophecy and sowed his little patch of lettuce and radish in a sunny corner may reap his modest harvest and scoff at the wiseacres an' he will. For he sowed outdoors in the Fall, rashly dispensing with cold frames or other protection.

The orchards too were cared for in the Fall—deep plowed, and now have just been pruned and harrowed, either already irrigated or about to be so. The previous Summer's abnormally heavy rains have brought wild grass into a corner of the alfalfa so I decide to fence instead of plowing and re-seeding the marred acre, so that later on the cows may be turned on it—cautiously, and for very brief periods. Jerseys running at large in green alfalfa are doomed to death, or escape but by a freak of fate. Scarcely a ranchman in the Valley has failed to lose purebred or graded cows from bloat, which, by-the-bye, is not to be confounded with colic. If Jerseys graze but a half hour on weedy or grassy

alfalfa, access to water is forbidden for two hours thereafter, as also before; indeed opinion tends to the belief that it is the combination of water and green alfalfa which is fatal, especially in the case of Jerseys, whose stomachs are small and habits voracious. But the season of bloat is yet afar off, although the cows must be corralled because they have a mania for nibbling swelling peach buds. The horses, less mischievous, may enjoy their liberty awhile longer.

As for plowing alfalfa—once a man has been driven to this task he will not hanker to repeat it; yet much of this heart and backbreaking labor was witnessed in days of war and wheat shortage, with tractors yet on the horizon. Alfalfa roots seem to penetrate to the centre of the earth, and there is a stand down in Mexico which is reported to be three hundred years old. The crop varies in merit according to location. Alfalfa from this Valley ranks higher than that of Colorado, for the reason that the latter is often “bastard” alfalfa; the Valley horses will not touch it, although we obtain our best seed from Colorado.

Occasionally the resident is amused by some newcomer, professor or otherwise, who condescendingly informs him that alfalfa enriches the soil. He is a poor farmer who is ignorant of a fact so lacking in novelty.

The burning subject of *when* to begin irrigating this crop is already in our midst. The advantages of early irrigation are counterbalanced by the possible setback of a late frost; and night frosts, which

have been experienced as late as the first of May, and which naturally are harder on the advanced than on the backward crop, read us annually the old story of the hare and the tortoise. For my part I took the advice of one who had made exceeding good with alfalfa, and curbed my impatience in regard to early irrigation. It may be added that the first is usually the best crop, as it should be ready to cut before the middle of May, thus avoiding the danger of Summer rains and the impairment by Summer weeds.

But the darkening evening interrupts ranching meditations and I turn toward the lighted kitchen. Cortes, rather shivery but relieved, jumps as I reach what is to him dry land, and endeavors to bite Betsey's tail. Being somewhat bashful he would not venture on such a liberty were it not that the excitement of our safe return has gone to his head. She growls, and I put her down to adjust her own affairs, and away both little dogs frisk to the open door, Hilda, the big St. Bernard, gambolling cumberously after them and making believe to gobble them up.

Spring, with its rapidly increasing cares, advances rapidly— Spring, when the *acequias* brim with the brown and rushing flood, and the orchards flush with color on the wing and on the branch, and resound with song to match the dazzling plumage of the varied choir. The winter world casts off its mantle of drab and springs to greet the ever rising year. Yet Nature still uses her lightest touch, scattering emeralds upon the cottonwoods so warily



AN AGED TIA

that the rugged outline of the Doña Ana mountains is hardly broken.

But now too we have the winds to reckon with—the warm west winds which from time to time go bellowing through our midst. Through our midst is no mere old-fashioned figure of speech; it is only too painfully accurate. Consolation, oft grievously needed, may be found in the knowledge that these Spring gales act as a purifier and disinfectant; further, that while blowing when and where they list, the damage they effect is wholly out of proportion to their noise. Their velocity indeed does not in actual fact compare with that attained by gales in other sections of country, and blizzards, cyclones and northerns are unknown. I have watched a winter norther romp and rage through my heavily weighted orange grove in Southern California for nearly a week at a time; whereas our worst winds arrive before peach, apple and other orchards are mellow. My California kinsman coming in after a day's attention to my New Mexican ranch, remarks that a good shake disposes of Mesilla Valley dust but that California dust requires strenuous treatment—which by personal experience I know to be true. Now and then a lamb-like March and April blusters out into a rowdy May, and the May winds are of all the most undesirable, even though they are apt to stir things up in the east, from which quarter our rains may be looked for.

But now at last the long Spring day draws to a close, and the wind has dropped exhausted over the

Organs. Strewn from the western desert's wild wings across the unpaintable blue of the twilight sky stream rose-red pennants, tender yet resplendent—not the washed out hue of other sunset skies but the soul satisfying glory of color the desert sky alone can show.

And then when morning dawns after one of these obnoxious winds, you look up to meet, as it were, the blue, innocent eye of a little child, quite ignorant of having given offence. "What have I done that you should be angry with me?" a voice as innocent as the eye seems to say. What indeed! Nature is impenitent, but you forgive her, and go forth to inhale the clear-blown, life-giving atmosphere without more words.

With what completeness in these southern lands are soiled pages turned! One Christmas I was journeying across Louisiana after a season of pitiless rains. Most of the sugar cane was cut and lay sodden in the fields. In the dense woods trees stood knee deep in water, gray moss dripping from their branches. Palms thrust stiff green fingers upward, and from time to time, as we passed, a crimson flower flashed at us. Rank and decaying vegetation crowded, and through it miserable cattle splashed. And then, suddenly, the train rumbled out from beneath the low clouds; small towns appeared, front yards bloomed, people rocked serenely on porches, and the uncut cane glittered, a wide green plain, in the blaze of a westering sun. Then a bayou displayed limpid waters, on the opal face of which steamboats and live oaks were reflected—bright

similitude of peace. Here Nature seemed repentant of her outburst; not so in New Mexico!

Spring is closing her open book and it is early May when one Sunday we drive to a neighboring village—to find that in this more primeval settlement the world has stood still. The exact date of the (Mexican) settlement of Mesilla is uncertain, occurring probably in the first years of the nineteenth century, but its era of prosperity did not set in until the Valley came into the possession of the United States by purchase in the fifties. An army post was established, and the dust of sleepy streets was stirred by the passing of mail and freight coaches and wagons. Its day of decadence dawned when it turned with loathing from the offer of a railroad. To this day the village remains much as it was, though shorn to some extent of its pictur-esquefulness.

As we tie the horses to a tree in the plaza, in front of the patched and timeworn church (at this later date too blatantly “restored”), the entire community appears to be slumbering. Then unexpectedly double doors are flung wide, color and radiance stream forth, and one of us cries—“O, for a painter’s brush!” Within is the *patio* indigenous to the life of both Mexicos. Above the environing walls burns the blue May sky. In the centre of the patio a locust tree waves its fresh, frail leaves and scented blossoms, scattering shadows too over a mud-walled tank, from which spring spires of pink and crimson against the soft and varied browns of the background. On the step beneath the archway

sits a vandyke brown child, the crimson of whose garment repeats the tints of the flowers behind her. The child runs out to embrace Cortes, who loathes Mexicans, particularly the young of the race—a loathing inherited from the ages, no doubt—so shows his gleaming teeth balefully, and she retreats. A kodak is brought forth, but what is a mere kodak confronted with such a scene as this? And while we hesitate a smiling and portly Señora steps forth. Her in our best Mexican we salute, requesting permission to take a picture of her lovely patio and equally lovely *muchachita*. With alacrity she consents, re-arranges the child to less advantage, dives into the recesses of her dwelling, from whence she emerges with more flowers, but when asked to pose in the picture, genially but definitely declines. Soon we part, with mutual smiles and bows.

On we drive, leaving the distinctly Mexican quarter but feeling more and more as if we were rolling through the gardens of a Sleeping Beauty. For the streets have become shadowy lanes, embowered in such a wealth of greenery as causes the stranger to rub his eyes and murmur: Is this indeed the Arid Belt? Giant china trees shower perfume from their violet sprays, their dense shade illumined by the lighter and more dancing shadows of cottonwood and locust. On either side, screened by high hedges of osage orange, vine-covered trellises and balconies and orchards, we catch glimpses of the palaces themselves, some in partial decay yet glowing warmly brown or silvery white through their veils of green. Upon them poetic fancy had something

whereon to feed, however absurdly, but where are they in these later days?

So as we went winding in those earlier days along silent by-ways, rounding corners which afforded peeps of azure mountains set in a framework of foliage, it was easy to forget that we were living in a wideawake world—that this old, old world, wrapped in enchanted slumber, was not ours for all time.

Idle dreams, in truth, and to them succeeded, in swift and due course, the practical.

CHAPTER IV

THE RIO BRAVO, IRRIGATION AND CROPS

ONCE IT was my good fortune to stand close beside the River when it was starting out on one of its rampages. A neighbor had business concerned with a *bosque*, one of many bordering our capricious stream, and suggested that I should accompany him on the long drive, and see for myself what "was doing." By the time we reached our destination the growling of many waters was plainly audible and the horse's feet already making splashy noises. However, the river bank rose safely upward, and on this he left me while he proceeded to transact his business. My part was to unpack the lunch, but the fascination of the scene was too great for such trivialities.

This at last was the Rio Grande, the Rio Bravo; no longer a lick and a promise but a full flood, dark and angry, muttering, roaring even in places—hurrying, hurrying, with a threat in its voice and in the shifting quicksands over which it rolled. Already its swirling eddies were eating into the bank on which I stood, and a little higher up a tree fell with a crash, either undermined, or cut down by shouting men engaged in strengthening the river's boundaries. The wind sang gaily in the swaying cottonwoods overhead, their young children swinging tender branches in the brown flood.

And it was well that I had ignored the lunch, for the buggy came squelching and rocking back through water now knee deep, and I was enjoined to throw the lunch basket ahead of me and speed down the bank, as it was only regaining the buggy with the aid of a strong arm and a strong branch. Two or three days after this delightful little adventure I had occasion to go to the city, but taking wise advice returned that same night, the train sometimes crawling through water so deep that the crew sounded it with long poles. And that was the last through train for many, many days.

The Indians had one resource when the fickle stream played tricks on them—a resource which has somehow failed us of a later generation. For them no sitting down in resignation, no folding of the hands to sleep, but they uprose as one man, and having slain a young virgin to propitiate the god of waters confidently awaited results. At this point history provokingly stops short, leaving the rest to our imagination. Yet to this day in some portions of New Mexico and Arizona Mexicans carry the image of San Ysidro, the agricultural saint, to bless their crops, but though the firing of guns, inevitable concomitant of all exciting events, is scrupulously observed, and only water is drunk, except possibly a light corn wine, we hear of no particularly striking reform on the part of our old river. A whole day is (or not long since was) given up in the Mesilla Valley to invoking and blessing the slippery Rio Grande, who is liable to give his reverent worshippers the go-by just the same.

The American resorts to what, on the whole, are more practical measures. On the high lands and mesas where rainfall is more assured than in the valleys he takes to dry-farming, which is really only intense cultivation, such as I was taught to practise in the case of the young peach orchard mentioned in an earlier chapter. Moreover in the high lands gramma grass flourishes, and makes a better winter feed for grazing stock.

But on this rare June morning the Rio Grande is conducting itself with decorum—or at least I prefer to think it is as I step forth at nearly seven of the clock. Breakfast is fizzling on the range, the aroma of Java and Mocha floating through open doors and windows. The flock of ebony hens, lately released and heralded by a gay chanticleer, scarlet combs glowing in the sunshine, are grazing in the alfalfa, crooning their satisfaction. The cows in the corral chew the cud of bovine ease. Up and down the drive, round and round in the meadows, kicking up her heels in the joy of living, races a blooded colt, the hope of the ranchwoman to whom the plug of the Far West is the abomination of desolation. Meanwhile the mother tugs at her rope in all the futility of maternal anxiety.

Equally anxious, though from a different cause, I stand at the kitchen door, shading my eyes from the blinding radiance without.

“Juan, have we got the water?”

“*Si, Señora!*” cheerfully.

“Good! Now hold on to it!”

“*Muy bien, Señora!*”

And the bare brown legs, big sombrero and clumsy hoe disappear among the peach trees. If there is any more entrancing sound than the hissing of water into cracked and thirsty land, a more refreshing sight than that of the murky torrent spreading cool fingers over the face of heated meadow and orchard, the ranchwoman is not acquainted with either.

And beautiful indeed upon the mountains as the feet of those bringing glad tidings is early morn in New Mexico. Each day is a new birth, a new heaven and a new earth. When dawn steals along the Valley and morning leaps in glory on the porphyry peaks, the heart leaps with it; for the new day is ours—not to do with it what we will, perhaps, but to do with it the best we can. The night may have been one of dread and watching and the hours to come burdened with tasks, but never can those tasks become sordid to the nature lover. The “glory of the dream” is reborn, day after day, even though it be sullied in an hour. . . .

THERE ARE some arts of which a man becomes master in the course of three hundred years or so. Levelling land is one, irrigation is another. In both these arts the Mexican is at his best. Not that the progressive American fails to get ahead of him at times, even in his own game, but the progressive farmer is not yet as plentiful in our Valley as the eastern blackberry upon the wayside bush; therefore the Mexican, with his big hoe and inherited lore, continues to be a valuable person.

Land to be irrigated must present an absolutely flat surface. Alfalfa will not thrive in water-logged soil. Now comes in our friend Juan or Jesus, who with plow and scraper reduces the land to a uniform level. Then he blocks it out in squares until the whole affair looks like a gigantic chessboard. The sides of each square are heaped sufficiently high to retain the water for thorough saturation of the soil. As soon as one square is soaked a hole is made in the "border" with the ubiquitous hoe, and the stream gushes forth into the next square, and so on. This is irrigating after the Mexican manner, and even if some American farmer prefers a more elaborate method, it comes to much the same thing in the end.

Nevertheless, the American who makes his irrigating ditches deeper and wider and his borders higher is the man who gets ahead.

Many Americans irrigate before sowing and not again until the crop is well above ground. Personally I have had indifferent success with this plan, and so have done as the natives do. The Mexican sows his seed before repairing to the Community *acequia*, or ditch. He raises the water gate, and lets the water flow into the private ditches of the ranch, and then following up with his hoe, proceeds as heretofore described. This is the simple yet effectual flooding system. It seems as if the fine seed of the alfalfa, sown near the surface and only brushed over and not harrowed into the ground, must inevitably be swept away and drowned, but somehow or other it survives, and soon greets our eyes with a brave show of green. It is usually sown here in

March or April and with a nurse crop of wheat, oats or barley, for the double purpose of keeping the weeds down and sheltering the young alfalfa from the burning rays of the sun. This method bears reason on its face. The crop is ready for its first cutting by the time the nurse crop is high enough to be cut for fodder.

A prettier spectacle than a meadow of well established alfalfa ripe for the harvest, rippling like a purple sea before a gentle breeze, it would be difficult to picture, even for the man who cares nothing for farming. The first cutting of such an established crop occurs early in May, and at intervals from six to seven weeks during the season.

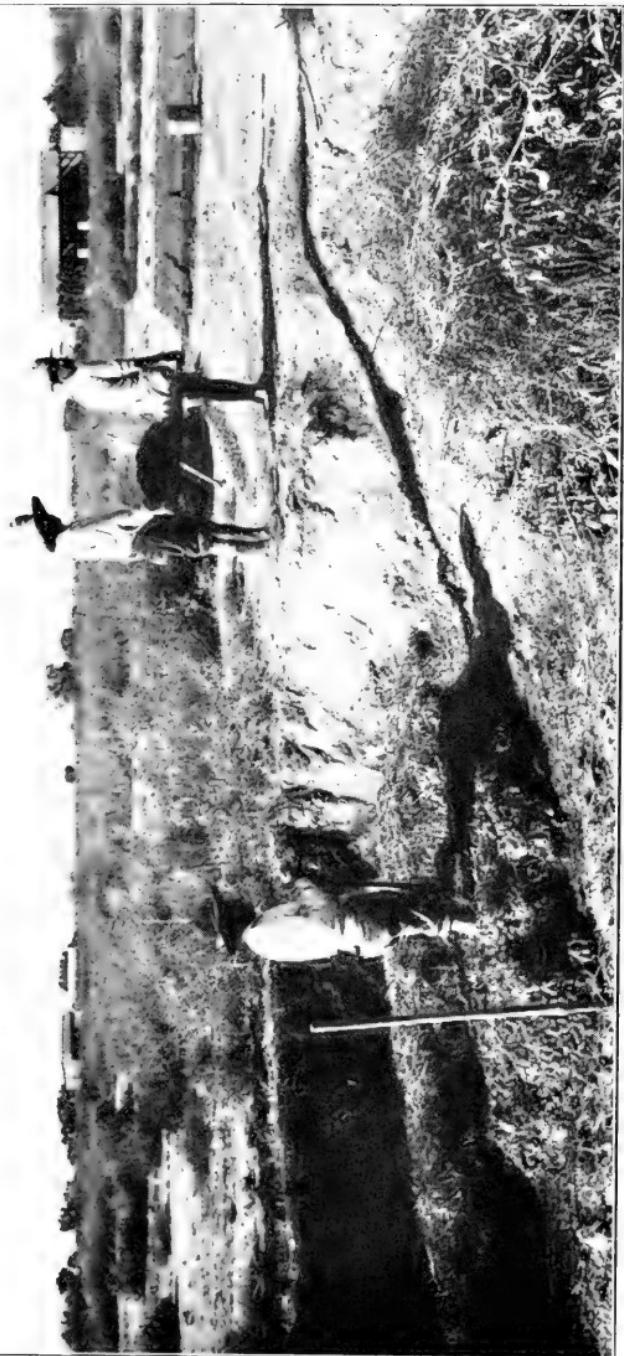
In nutritive and muscle forming qualities alfalfa has no equal. Work horses fed alfalfa only keep in fine shape and spirit, always provided that they are fed enough and given sufficient time in which to eat it. It is the owner and not alfalfa who must be blamed for his bony steed. This assertion has been proved correct by years of actual experience. Cows fed alfalfa hay, supplemented in winter by a nightly ration of bran, produce butter unsurpassed both in quality and quantity. On some fourteen acres a few head of stock can graze from November to March, thus eking out the baled hay. But alfalfa will not endure too close grazing or any other intensive ill treatment; it must be watched and cared for, whilst yet remaining "the lazy man's crop." Hogs and chickens graze it also, and with little additional food during the growing season are remunerative to their owners. Two hundred and

fifty hogs throve and grew fat spending the spring and summer months on a two and a half acre alfalfa pasture, and ten hogs turned into a one acre pasture for eight months had increased seventy-five pounds per head at the end of six months. Of course movable fences were used to permit of thorough irrigation. Into the more up-to-date methods of fattening hogs I do not propose to enter, my own experience not having been in that line, but I do know that it is quite common for sows in this climate to raise two litters per annum.

The flooding system already described is employed in the cultivation of the majority of crops—for wheat, corn, certain varieties of vegetables, and usually speaking, for orchards. But should the progressive farmer flood his orchard in warm weather he will protect the trunks of his trees from contact with the water, thus avoiding what is termed sun-scald.

The furrow system of irrigation is theoretically the superior of the flooding system, but when put to the test in the case of orchards does not necessarily prove infallible. The reason for its occasional failure is not obvious, for its advantages would appear to be unanswerable and in other localities stands the test of trial, not only for vegetables and such crops as canteloupes and the like, but also for orchards. In the latter case the farmer plows deep furrows on either side each row of trees, and into these ditches runs the water instead of spreading it broadcast. Thus the growth of rank weeds is discouraged, every drop of moisture is utilized, seeping slowly down

MAKING ADOBE BRICKS



to the trees' roots, and there is no possibility of sun-scald. One thorough plowing during the season is sufficient, a harrow of any up-to-date make keeping the land in fine tilth. Nevertheless some orchardists have abandoned an apparently rational system and have fallen back on ancient ways. For this there must be some good reason; although it must be repeated that peach orchards, with which I have had the most intensive experience, are no longer what they were in number or perfection, and pear orchards have to a large extent taken their place.

The necessity of breaking up the soil in some manner after each irrigation and keeping the orchard land like a seed bed is still not universally appreciated. When the time arrives for cultivating the careless orchardist floods again. The fundamental cause of too much loose farming with us is—or perhaps I may soon have to say was—the almost unparalleled fertility of the soil in combination with a beneficent climate. The newcomer's idea is—or was—as often as not that lounging on his porch and ordering his peon around comprises all that is necessary to his farming salvation. He beholds luxuriant crops and orchards laden with fruit, and believes he can enjoy the like blessings minus thought and toil. Just there he falls down *hard*, to employ the vernacular. For centuries this kind corner of the earth has rewarded man far beyond his just deserts, but now he must awake from sloth. And after all, and at its worst, ranching in Southern New Mexico is not so arduous as in the east; hours are comparatively short, and climatic rigors prac-

tically unknown, or such as they are would scarcely count as such in the estimation of the eastern farmer. It may be supposed that even in prehistoric days there existed ranchers of sorts—those who made good in their business, and those who branded it with a big “N. G.”

The “two-story” method of farming has long been practised in this Valley, though written up in later years as something entirely novel. Wherever the soil is sufficiently rich to carry two crops or more in one season such a method is good, the sole objection being that when practised in an orchard it interferes with the thorough cultivation absolutely necessary to the production of first class fruit. In a young orchard, however, corn is beneficial, for not only must corn itself be cultivated but as it grows it affords shade.

The Valley soil is composed of adobe (clay) and sandy loam, in alternation or blended; and where sand occurs it is either what the Mexicans call “good sand” or could be irrigated into fertility. Alkali, found in my ranching days only in spots, was sometimes the reverse of harmful when well mixed by deep cultivation, or it could be eliminated by repeated irrigations. In those days, too, it was quite possible to find land too rich and heavy for fruit trees. Fertilisers were then not merely unnecessary but actually harmful, and the Egyptian Plague of wormy beasts is put down by some to the present use of barnyard manure. Every reform has its initiatory drawbacks, and “the beautiful clear water,” of which the Reclamation Service is so proud,

may be accounted one of them, as will be seen by the analysis here presented of the once muddy waters of the Rio Grande:

Phosphate Acid	0.14 per cent
Potash	1.21 per cent
Nitrogen	0.13 per cent

Could fertilising properties furnished gratis further go? The costly drawbacks accompanying the Reclamation Project, however, form subjects for so many animated arguments that I prefer to steer away from rather than into them.

And always must there be water. Any ranching person who has striven with the exasperating ancient methods of obtaining this life giving necessity could not do otherwise than welcome law and order as administered under the present regime, even with its drawbacks. Yes—even if he has to watch the beloved and mysterious acequias stripped bare by the ruthless hand of Progress; to behold the tall canes and cottonwoods, threaded by whispering, meandering paths, laid low; to be able to follow no longer those secretive ways within sight and sound of brown and swirling waters and indulge in weird jungle dreams—even so, he must perforce submit; and after all is said, and thought, he is in the small minority, that very small minority which would do better to harbor no tastes but the material. For that which represents to the artistic eye ruin and despair, is to the eye of the practical ranchman Improvement writ large.

In former days the law of the acequia was a by-word in the market place—not, let me hasten to add,

that it is by any means certain that the average white man acting as majordomo would have shown himself less corrupt or corruptible. The system itself was to blame, and the worst enemy of the old-time majordomo was forced to acknowledge that his was a position difficult indeed to fill to the satisfaction of all concerned. But the lone woman lost nothing—as she loses nothing—by keeping on good terms with Mexicans, official or otherwise; for on the whole they must be credited with more chivalry or good nature, or both, than the white man. Above all was it necessary for the ranchwoman whose land was watered by means of a contra acequia, or cross ditch, to be well considered by her neighbors; for it was so attractively simple for said neighbors to steal the water on its way from the main acequia, and thus a whole day might be wasted in walking to and fro and expostulating with a variety of empty words. Of course the neighbors could be terrorized, but that proceeding had its drawbacks. Should peaceful means fail, however, which was rarely the case, the reward of being on pleasant terms with the majordomo then materialized. In short, though past days were sometimes troublous, they seldom lacked a certain humorous aspect. As for the "bad years," when the river went dry for any length of time, they were few; and in fourteen years my ranching journal notes but one season in which only two cuttings of alfalfa were harvested.

To return to the subject of peach orchards: phenomenal is the Spring that comes round without the accompanying wail that "the Valley fruit has

gone up!" One learns through the passing of many Springs to rest undisturbed by such outcries; and presently even the most hysterical compose themselves and find that in at least seven or eight cases out of ten no harm has been done. Here and there one lights on a newcomer who turns a deaf ear to calamity howlers and having raised a peach orchard waxes eloquent in praise of the unusually fine flavor, size and beauty of the Mesilla Valley peach. And well he may; for though apple and pear orchards are fruitful and remunerative, they come into bearing later than the peach, and lack also the distinctive traits of the Valley peach which won laurels for itself all over the West, even to bearing home the Gold Medal from the Chicago World's Fair. But with the passing of the great orchardists passed also the fame of the Valley peach; seldom is it to be seen now in its old time perfection.

When I arrived in the Mesilla Valley there existed several noteworthy orchards of this fruit, one in particular being a "show" place, with shaded drives for the enjoyment of strangers within its gates. There are no such places now. One orchard I visited contained about one hundred acres, and shipped from eighteen to thirty-five carloads of fancy fruit per season to eastern markets. The thinning of this typical orchard had provided employment for some forty or more men, and the pruning was also an extensive affair. One heard of trees in bearing when a quarter of a century old, and I myself have seen twelve year old trees cut down to the fork, renew their youth and with it their productiveness. Soil

and climate specially favor the peach, both as to fruitfulness and long life. Despite up-to-date terror of late frosts never but once in my ranching years did I have to resort to buying imported peaches. After sampling them one after the other on my homeward road all were finally consigned to the wayside dust. Thus easily are we spoiled by the "gilt-edged" things of life!

Fruit drying has been tried in a small way with success; as why should it not be successful in a climate so pre-eminently adapted to drying by natural means? Everything exposed to the sun and air desiccates rather than decays. A gay plumaged bird shot and lost was found weeks later in a perfect state of preservation, and carcases of dead animals permitted to adorn our highways turn at once into innocuous mummies.

All vegetables grown in the Valley are well flavored, whether due to altitude, climate or soil cannot be told. The crisp melt-in-the-mouth celery makes a person look with disgust on the tough, stringy shipped-in stuff. But expert gardeners are not evolved in a day, and unfortunately celery growers are all too few in the Valley. Canteloupes, cabbages, onions and tomatoes all thrive. The report for 1918 shows a yield to canteloupe growers of between \$125,000 and \$150,000. Fifty acres of cabbage sold for more than \$20,000. But statistics are dull reading, and figures uninteresting to all but farmers. It is well to add, nevertheless, that citrus fruits are not included in the Valley repertoire, eastern pamphlets, together with east-



A FLOODED RANCH

ern doctors who send healthseekers to shiver in our Valley without winter clothing, to the contrary notwithstanding. Further, in selecting his crop the prospective ranchman must take into account the amount of labor required for the crop of his choice, the ready cash he possesses to pay the rising cost of labor, taxes and so forth. Many do not pause to consider ways and means but hurry joyously to paper profits—futures, that is. In talking with a highly successful ranchman recently I was interested to learn that he viewed cotton as the coming banner crop of this section; not having a head for figures unless promptly written down I will not presume to specify the number of bales he raised to the acre. There is ample proof that in ancient times Indian races were successful with cotton, but this crop is only now making a fresh start in both Valleys. My informant pleased me by rating my favorite alfalfa next in order to cotton as a money-maker, although as already told it will not stand arrant neglect. It needs comparatively slight labor or care, is not pestered with modern bugs of sorts, is easy to market and so forth. And in these days of water abundance let not the humble berry be overlooked. Strawberries have always been exceptionally fine and well flavored and were I now in the farming business a large slice of land would be given up to berry culture of every description. Our neighboring Texan city has been slow to show hospitality to Upper Valley products as every housekeeper in that city knows, compelled as she too often is to supply her household with unripe or half

rotted fruit from California or elsewhere. If it be true that our city is undergoing a slight change of heart, it is full time that she did.

To go backward once more: driving one afternoon across a strip of unreclaimed land I came unexpectedly upon a wheat field. There had been phenomenally early thunder showers, for it was yet June, and the air held a dewy softness characteristic only of the rainy season with us. Clouds were trailing giant shadows over the bright rainwashed face of the mountains, and the varying greens from emerald to bronze, the play of light and shade which renders the Arid Belt so enchanting yet so exasperating to the brush artist, made a picture unsurpassed in rural loveliness. The eastern mesa wore its gentlest, most emotional aspect. I use the word emotional for the reason that nearer the Coast mountain and valley, especially in summer time, strike the artist eye as stupidly unemotional in their dull, unvaryingly olive green habiliments, in comparison with the astonishing effects produced here by rolling summer clouds, or by the wind clouds of spring. This afternoon the red domes of the Catholic church shone richly through the bower of greenery in which the town nestles, and the foreground was consummately effected by the ruddy patch of wheat and stubble, stooping figures of Mexicans, a man in blue overalls and jumper erect against a harmonious sky. Some of the belated harvest had been reaped, but there were no shocks. Instead the crop was being gathered in handfuls and armsfull from the

ground, or the wheat heads were chopped off the standing straw, and in such manner carried in dolls' bundles to a rickety wagon. The reaping, if so it could be called, was done with miniature reaping hooks dating from bygone ages. All futile and inadequate, of course, but from the artistic viewpoint not to be improved upon.

I chanced to be on my way to visit an expert North Western wheatgrower, not long established in the Valley. His harvest was already gathered, but he scorned the idea of having lost an hour's sleep in "water worry"! His forty bushels to the acre were raised because he had plowed and sown deep instead of scratching the soil and scattering the seed broadcast. Thus the abundant spring irrigations went in and stayed in. Now he was preparing the same acreage for corn, a double crop working no injury to such rich land. Corn is a more troublesome and thirsty crop than wheat, but succeeds well in the Valley. As for wheat, though yielding profitably under good cultivation, I have heard farmers, whose triumphs entitle them to a respectful hearing, maintain that wheat will never bring fortune in its train in the Rio Grande Valley, because the climate is neither cold nor damp enough.

My neighbor, the wheatgrower of that date, is the father of two rosy little girls, constant visitors to my ranch, either bent on raking my hay with horses broken by themselves, or aiming for social pleasures only. They do all the household work at home, occasionally aided by their busy father, and with joy apply themselves to outdoor duties as well.

At a pinch they have flown to my rescue, spending nights with me, and cooking such breakfasts as leaders of the simple life are more than glad to praise. Followed by their piping farewells, and after Bettinda has been kissed to repletion, I start for home.

The sun has set, yet earth, air and sky are luminous with a quality which is not radiance but rather its ethereal counterpart. The mountains, unlit, thrust silvered shafts out of the violet gray of canons, themselves as indefinite yet distinct as half remembered dreams. The straw of the shorn wheat fields lie like lakes of unclouded amber set in the twilight of alfalfa meadows. Gold there is none. Amber is everywhere, lustrous, pervasive, faintly tinting the very backs of the sheep, as with bleats of remonstrance they tread the circle of the threshing ground—laid out almost in the centre of the highway—and lighting the sheaves beneath their feet. Behind the circling flock walks a young boy clad in sober blue, his straw sombrero pushed back upon his dusky head, the seriousness of responsibility in his agate eyes, and over his shoulder an emerald cottonwood branch, borne as the boys of Holy Writ bore their branches of palm. The weird cry, wailing across wide reaching lands as the lament of some abandoned soul, quivers on its sustained note, then drops, as the men outside the circle raise or lower their arms. Into the land of the Northern Mystery my mind unbidden drifts—into centuries dead and gone.

Driving onward I find threshing at an end, and in the light breeze fanning earthward men toss the

wheat over their heads, thus letting Nature do their winnowing. Later, in the Fall days, women may yet be found, grinding the corn between the upper and the nether millstone.

But all these things pass away, all relics of the past primeval.

Nearing home I come to a flat roofed town in miniature, a bee-town. Lucrative as such settlements are to their owners, fifty pounds of comb honey per hive being considered a moderate estimate and ambrosial as is the Valley honey, I prefer not to engage in this industry. I do not like bees, and, far more important, they do not like me. At one time I gave them credit for being at least hard-working, but I have learned that in New Mexico they are sometimes disgracefully lazy and have to be urged into doing business. The bee is due to work for from three to five months in the year here, but does not always live up to his schedule.

So doth the little busy bee.

Furthermore, owing to the smaller acreage of alfalfa sown in later years this nominally industrious insect has to be fed more plentifully than of old, and sugar is no longer a cheap commodity. Ergo, honey is no longer cheap.

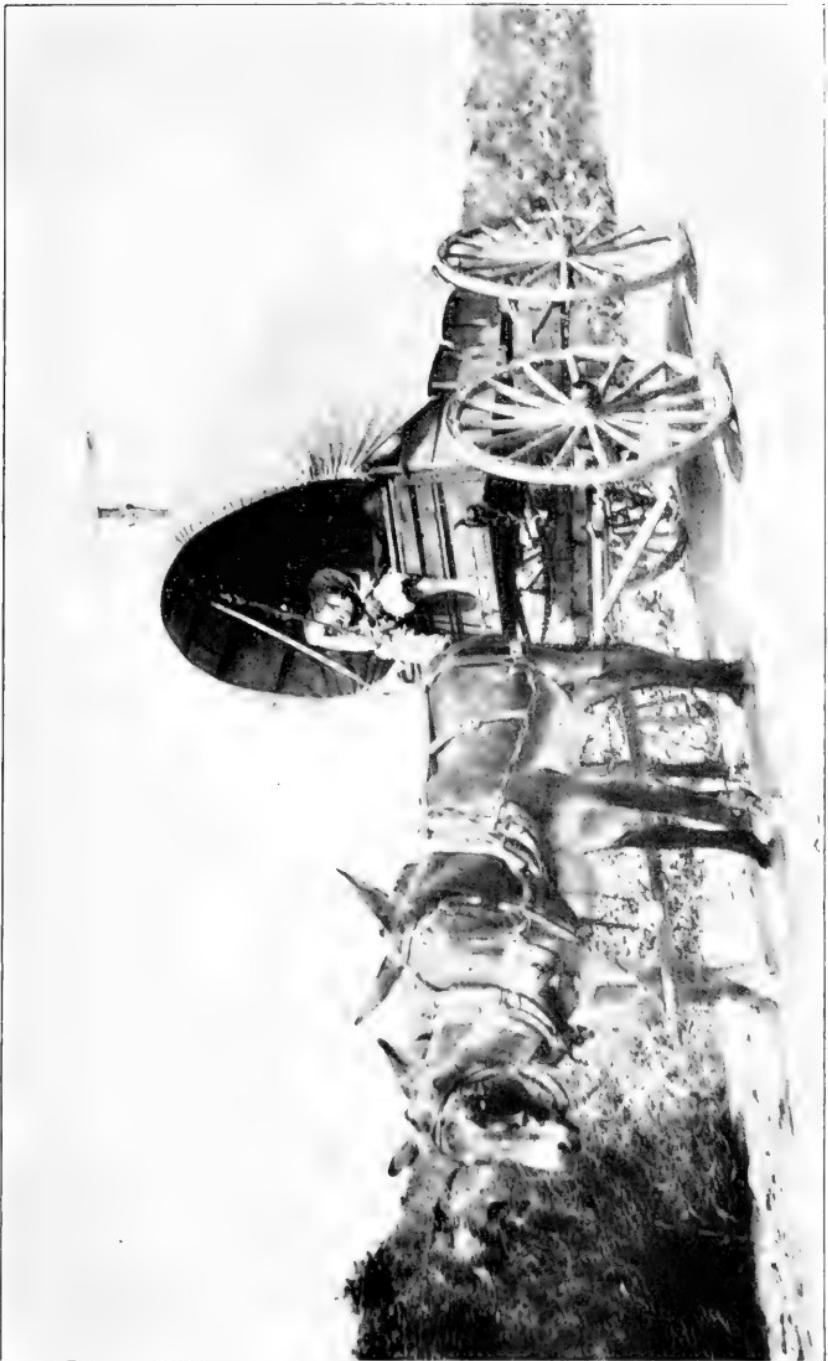
And now the long respected bee is accused of spreading pear blight. Clearly the vogue of the Bee is passing.

CHAPTER V

SUMMER DAYS AND NIGHTS

SUNDAY MORNING. My first cutting of alfalfa is safely out of the way and the irrigation of the shorn fields is completed, and for the passing hour I am at peace with the whole world. It is only right, mete and proper that I should be in this beatific state of mind, for the early hours have been most unsabbathically employed.

Juan was irrigating all night, and when at the Sunday hour of eight or thereabouts I stepped forth arrayed in whitest white with the ultimate intention of attending church, I was confronted with a spectacle which caused me to snatch my hoe from the porch and hurl myself into a singlehanded struggle with waters all too swift and strong. Far up the ranch Juan was still racing back and forth, but around the house one of the ditches had broken, the drive was submerged and the insidious wave was threatening my mud mansion. Sunday and snowy raiment immediately became things of naught, and for two mortal hours, the sun grinning ever wider and wider overhead, I strove with weeds, lumps of clay and finally gunny sacks ere I succeeded in stopping the perilous leak. When Juan appeared announcing the completion of his task he stared open-mouthed at the Señora, bedaubed as she was with symbols of victory.



A MULE TEAM

"Why did you not call me, Señora?" Then be-thinking himself he shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands. "The Señora did well not to wait," he conceded.

Thus at last I am as free from ranching agitations as the little dogs reclining in the garden—reclining, but not "relaxed" according to modern instructions. It is worthy of observation that they have disposed their small persons at a discreet distance from a lilac bush already pre-empted by butcher-birds for purposes of their own. Not only are they butchers but warriors of the most aggressive type, and should any dog, large or small, stroll carelessly within six feet of their nest, out they dash, and in the parlance of the country give that dog fits. Howls and groans, deep or shrill, proclaim that a sharp bill has penetrated some canine back. Beautiful and bloodthirsty, these winged monsters leave a trail of death all through the orchards, in the shape of insects impaled on twigs and left there to die. Murder, bloody murder, is the slogan of the butcher-bird. A canary hung outdoors in its cage is doomed. By some unknown means the gay plumaged terror entices the canary close to the bars, and then off goes its head. But as I do not keep canaries I am spared one form of worry.

Scarcely had I got myself into a clean frock than Mrs. X. called by to engage a pint of Jersey cream for her bridge party the following afternoon, and incidentally to tell me of a night spent in a house of mourning. She is now on her way home, and concludes her recital by saying that she intends to take

a long nap. She is one of the best of women, Mrs. X., at the same time I am led to speculate whether her type—for she represents a type—is not curiously insensitive? This probably heretical surmise persists. The benevolent ministrations of such women leave them unperturbed, appetite and capacity for sleep normal. It has been my lot to have been mixed up with horror, grief and tragedy—not constantly after the manner of my kind neighbor, but often enough, God wot. Such experiences do not slide so easily into the limbo of forgetfulness but abide to haunt one's dreams, torture one's waking hours, urge one to fretting, and often vain, endeavor to mitigate cruel circumstance. Of all forms of suffering vicarious suffering presents itself to me as the least endurable. With kind, useful Mrs. X. the case is otherwise.

"Of course you won't come to my bridge party?" she observes as she lifts the reins. "You are absolutely impossible!"

"Incompetence like mine is impossible!" I retort. "Instead of spoiling a pleasant game I am better employed in putting my chickens to bed and disposing of the evening's milk."

She departs with a neighborly sniff, quite unconvinced, and I am abandoned to my reading, or what I believe to be reading. As a matter of fact I am soon gazing idly out of the eastern window of my big, cool den. Who would not, given the same outlook?

The roses that have run riot in my garden for weeks all too brief are now over, the midsummer

ones still dormant in their green sheaths. Spring has folded her bright wings; but white and crimson hollyhocks rise proudly against the silvery blue of peaks yet shining with the—entirely mythical—dews of morn. Cottonwoods fresh with promise of eternal youth frame the picture, already flinging, with refreshing untidiness, their snowy feathers up into the azure sky or down upon my garden paths. What of it? Sordid and Martha-like is that spirit which cumbers itself with such trifles as the disorderly habits of summer snows, or fusses about summer heat or winter cold when sheltered from both by a spacious, high-ceilinged adobe house—built, too, not only on one floor but by those who knew how to build. There are adobes and adobes, of course. The bricks are fashioned of mud and straw, run into a mould and then laid out in the sun to dry. Mine is a real old-timey adobe mansion. Let those who worship the little tin god called STYLE roast or freeze in lesser houses of frame or brick, and suffer and be still. If they prefer a row of west windows, too, letting in the roystering wind of Spring and the burning sun of Summer, that also is their choice; and few realize, indeed, that with us a southern or eastern exposure is the best, the cool breezes coming from one of those quarters. As a tenderfoot I was once sceptical, but learned my lesson very soon. Some never learn, nor even know from which direction the wild winds or gentle zephyrs blow.

The well built adobe house, then, is an adobe for the very gods—until maybe the rains come along

about the last of June, or later, and trickles of muddy water find their way through the flat roof and splash upon the noses of workers enjoying well earned slumbers. But abuse and violence can be forever quelled by the simple expedient of planting on the Mexican roof an American roof, and painting the same a rich crimson. Thus may one be simultaneously American and picturesque—a feat not to be sneered at.

None of our seasons come so much amiss to those who seek the deepest Heart of Things, and live in closest fellowship with Nature's moods and note her changing face and listen for her faintest whisper, but it is in winter that the healthseeker visits our sunbathed land. Winter is our trump card, then? Granted. But give me the early summer too, when my brown house veils itself, day by day, in flowers and greenery, sinking lower and lower into the arms of cottonwood, locust and umbrella trees, and the drone of bees and perpetual cooing of wild doves wakes memories of far off lands; when the June orchards thrust fruit all aglow into hands ready for the gathering, and the mocking birds, noisy rascals, shout night and day; and the ultramarine of the sky takes on a paler, tenderer hue, into which *azul* bath as the heat wave surges along the Valley the mountains plunge their phantom spires, retiring further and further into the land of dreams. Then it is that, noontide drawing near, the olive mesa decks itself transiently in ribbons of gold and black as the summer clouds roll across high heaven—fore-runners of a rainy season yet to come—leaving in

their passing swift fading afterthoughts on those mountains' rockbound sides.

And morning after morning, under the climbing sun, and evening after evening when the moon swims up from behind the lonely peaks or the stars creep out solitary, a breeze like the cool foam "of perilous seas" in some "fairyland forlorn" scatters its vivifying drops upon the heated face of the Valley, and we breathe the veritable breath of life as those who abide at sea-level never can do. Ours is the dewless Arid Belt indeed, but ours too is the keen, pure air of untrodden desert and mountain.

It is the habit of the prosperous to declare that everything has its compensations, and for once it must be allowed that the prosperous are right, though prating after their manner of that of which they know nothing.

There is little neighborliness in Nature here, nevertheless. Even at her fairest she retains her remoteness, her indifference. Yet somehow we feel that it is here, just here, that she, in spite of herself enters into our heart of hearts. She who would not appeal has appealed. In her often wild and always solemn beauty she is the embodiment of all the sorrows of the world. We turn from her in vain; it is but to look and look again.

Much is bruited around concerning the "terrific heat" of our Valley. At once, without fear or favor but with ample opportunities for comparison at my command, I brand such yarns as arrant nonsense. Women, proverbially inaccurate and unobservant where Nature's manners and customs form

the basis of discussion, are prominent among the yarners.

"Would I were back with you!" writes one health-seeker of the male sex, healthseekers being wont to flee from us the moment Summer shows her glowing face—"You in New Mexico are fortunate in being spared our eastern "heated spell." Why did I grumble and complain and ignominiously take flight? Woe is me!"

Did we of the Arid Belt possess but one tithe of the boosting capacity exhibited by our Californian neighbors, or rather possessed the million or so to spend annually on a big Boost, such stuff as is used against us would never reach a human ear or eye.

"Isn't this a *beautiful* morning!" ejaculates your Californian as he passes you, sitting shuddering in wraps and praying the laggard sun to pierce the clammy fog.

If you are a moral coward, as most of us feel we have to be in California, you take up the joyous cry and pass it on. If you still retain some modicum of self respect, or bear in mind that back in New Mexico speech concerning the weather is very free indeed and we abuse it when so disposed, you stand pat; or you retort that you love fogs—some people do—or possibly venture timid disapproval and are promptly squelched.

For we of the Arid Belt—in which, by-the-bye, the Government establishes its health and rest resorts—are the champion grumblers of the United States. The more calculating Californian keeps his troubles to himself, or at least out of the news-

papers, whereas we at every climatic mishap burst hysterically into print, and see to it that our moans resound through the halls of civilization. Naturally our climate has its drawbacks and will continue to have until Paradise opens its doors, but to the experienced traveler—or rather to the observant traveler, the latter being in the minority—it has not a rival here below; or not, that is, in these United States.

There are many portions of this vast country which should be shunned by those yearning for the dubious joys of fires and blankets in summertime, as there are many persons mentally and physically unfitted for warm and sunlit days. Mentally, because they fuss and fret and fume themselves into a semi-boiling condition long ere the heated term arrives, for the reason that it should have arrived; physically, because they consult an unreliable thermometer every few minutes and if it reads 90 instead of the desired 80, groan and fan and borrow trouble generally, 80 as a matter of fact being a pleasant temperature at this altitude and 90 not so bad; such persons neither eat, dress nor live according to the dictates of common sense. They persist in their heavy winter diet, clasp winter clothing to melting bosoms, and imagine that open doors and windows in abundance during the heat of the day will keep the house cool. In New Mexico one can keep cool indoors if one will; in much traveling elsewhere in summer I have often been unable to achieve this desired consummation. Our rainy season to the contrary notwithstanding, the humid

heaviness of low altitudes rarely comes nigh us. Sunstrokes and heat-prostrations are unknown, and no matter to what height the thermometer may rise later, the morning hours are as the very Dayspring from on high, and around our rural retreat sings all night the tempered breeze from east or south. I have stood even at noon watering stock in the broiling sun—and no one devoid of practical knowledge is acquainted with the leisurely habits of the drinking animal—having to mark time with my thinly shod feet to keep them off the redhot ground, when suddenly up has sprung the vivifying breeze of the country, and at once I am cool, almost cold! Consequently the same given temperature at high altitude and low altitude implies perhaps twenty degrees of difference in one's feelings.

As July approaches it behooves the farmer to keep that weather eye, of which mention has been made, very wide open. Let him pay no heed to the man minus the aforesaid eye, or to the city dweller whose mind is akin to a sieve. The Tenderfoot in particular must beware of the latter, who may assure him that there has been no rain for two or three years. Watch the knowing ranchman's face when such assertions are made by those whose memories are of sieve-like quality. He has lost, and he knows. Too vividly his mind recalls many a downpour of the previous summer, ruined alfalfa and sodden cane—and grimly he smileth. Therefore is it incumbent on the ranching person to take note. For instance, I sally forth some clear, exquisite July or August

morning and perceive upon the Organ peaks a cloud no larger than a man's hand. I look upon my second crop of purple alfalfa and sigh, but what must be, must be, and I send the grumbling mowers away—who proceed to cut their own crop instead of mine, and while it lies helpless down comes a raging thunderstorm. But it is not my hay.

One summer I was compelled to abandon my ranch at the date of that second cutting. For the first time, and the last, in my ranching history I lost the entire crop. Why? Because the men in charge, who not only were to share the expected harvest but were older residents than I, had kept their weather eyes closed. In return for such losses and muddy roads and sometimes leaky roofs, a luscious green which climbs high up on the granite peaks delights the Arid Belt habitant—such green, such a wealth of rampant wild flowers, as is rare elsewhere in midsummer—rare, because this green is so fresh and young, and abides with us for months. The earth and all that is therein has turned backward, and there remains.

Occasionally the too credulous Tenderfoot is entrapped. Maybe, attracted by the abnormally fertile soil, whose reasonable reason he does not suspect, or beguiled by a real-estater, he has bought and built and settled himself in the Valley, unmindful of a dry arroyo at his back. His crops are fine, and he is a happy man—for the nonce. Then one dreadful day the storm descends, the arroyo fills and sweeps down upon his land; it is a lake and his house stands alone in its midst. He has come to

the Arid Belt to be ruined by an overplus of water. What irony of fate is this! A fate from which some charitable soul might have saved him, provided he had been willing to accept counsel. But charity and real-estating seldom walk hand in hand; neither is the newcomer to be consoled by the information that it may be four, five or more years before to his like catastrophe is repeated. He returns to his own wet country, shaking the mud of the dry country from his feet.

But in mid June the rainy season is still on the horizon, and this particular Sunday is typically warm and dry. As the day grows the cows seek the shade of the sheds, the hens that of their brush arbors, or else walk around with lifted wings and open beaks like tentative dancers—but then hens are absurd creatures anyhow. The roosters comport themselves in a more seemly manner. The horses, with apparent inconsistency, are inclined to seek the sunshine, for the reason that flies prefer the shade. Hilda, the big St. Bernard—or Bravo, the mongrel collie of dearer memory—extends herself in the yet damp acequia, and emerges therefrom a drab, queer, clipped being, unrecognizable as one of high degree, or when Ricardo arrives submits unwillingly to cooling showers from buckets.

And now by the tail wagging of all the dogs, the Chihuahuas uttering their characteristic note of welcome, and by the nickering of horses in corral or pasture and the faint lowing of cows, Ricardo has appeared upon the hitherto silent stage. Anon he will bring my buggy, and I and the little dogs

will bury ourselves in the recesses of its top and hie us to dine with friendly neighbors.

Sometimes, for weeks at a time, it chances that the days only can be spent at the ranch, and in winter at set of sun we betake ourselves for the night to our healthseekers' ranch resort, as sure of our welcome as anyone can be who passes much of a limited leisure with invalids and their relatives far from home and friends.

When in summer it is deemed desirable that I should thus abandon my adobe home, we prefer—at least I do—to first meander in the twilight adown the Valley road, over which hangs close and low a cloud of dust not there by day, to right and left of which smile superior green meadows and patches of corn, further yet the dark mesa sharply outlined upon the coppery west, and in the east the solemn violet peaks of evening. Self contained and remote, Nature watches us groping along our blinded course.

But at the end of the road there are lights and the patter of young feet hurrying to meet us, and a scramble to climb in where we all are, and boy voices—and we are no more alone.

Best of all does it seem, when possible, to remain beneath one's own roof tree, to partake of a primitive supper of bread and milk, and then mount and ride away into a world all one's own, into which no man, or woman either, ever enters. Here all is still, silent, mysterious with the mystery of the Great South West. Nature stands aloof as always, but now with her finger on her lip. "Hush!" she

breathes to the few who lift their eyes unto the hills. Deep, rich, subdued are the hues of her early night, from the brown of the acequia whispering beneath the olive of tall weeds and rustling cane and arching trees, to the profound yet pellucid ultramarine of the mountains and the mystic sweep of heaven. . . .

Homewardbound my unshod pony steals rhythmically up the drive, through a dusk heavy with the fragrance of china trees and blossoming meadows. The embowered house sits dumb, solitary and unwelcoming—not physically empty but heart and soul empty. By day it and the surrounding ranch may have rung to the shouts of happy boys, but now a sense of loneliness unspeakable, indescribable—nay, of abandonment—hovers around my brown mansion. I divest my pony of saddle and bridle and open for her the pasture gate. In an instant she and her constant companion are nickering on each others' necks, while I, still with that strange sense of homelessness, walk slowly to my home. The screen door of the illuminated kitchen flies wide, and with weird strains of rapture, neither howls nor whines, two white specks flash toward me through the dusk.

Who said there was no welcome for me? Nay, forsooth, it is a royal welcome!

Rising in the night watches, slumber hard to be entreated, I look forth on the changeful and now moonlit spaces overswept by wide winged shadows, stealthy visitants from the Great Unknown. Silence reigns but for the rarely hushed sigh and murmur

of the southwestern summer night. Then, rushing fearlessly into the stillness, ring out the exultant notes of the mocking bird in his prime—lord of Love and Life, challenging, as it were, the Immutable, the Eternal, which answer not. His voice breaks, droops, dies away in a long questioning whisper. The swift cool breeze tosses the cottonwood leaves in the face of the silver moon, and swings away across the desert to where the untrod-den spires of the mountains cleave the sky, them-selves as unheeding, as indifferent.

The moments pass solemnly. The bird lifts his wild voice no more. The winds pause in their flight. The darkest hour before the dawn is at hand.

“The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
And the weary winds are silent, and the moon is in the deep;
Some respite from its restlessness unresting ocean knows,
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its appointed sleep.
Thou in the grave shalt rest. . . .”

CHAPTER VI

THE PEON

FOR THE first few months of my career as an employer of Mexican labor in New Mexico I received the pardonable impression that the attitude most affected by our fellow citizen and fellow voter was that of his head in a wine barrel and his legs at right angles thereto. This impression, even as many others, underwent modifications. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the Mexican peon is, more often than not, fond of his drink. In these later years the training camp, with its discipline and enforcement of the liquor law, found favor with the very parents of the Mexican boys themselves; and it should be added in common justice that the number of young Mexicans who volunteered without waiting to be drafted exceeded that of Americans. This fact, creditable as it was, had its drawbacks at first because of the language difficulty, a considerable proportion of the new arrivals being unable to speak English. But to return to former days.

The *ranchero* who was not the owner of a vineyard was a rarity. The feet of the native had not forgotten how to tread the wine-press, and the skin of a steer swelled with new wine was yet to be seen suspended outside the dwelling of the landowner—may yet be seen in remoter portions of the State.

The shiftless type of peon, crawling along a road on some bitter, brilliant winter morning, crouched on the seat of his ramshackle wagon behind a team of dejected ponies, a blanket pulled over head and shoulders, the point where his nose might presumably exist buried in his knees, came in well as a figure for a middle distance. If not in his wagon or on his horse he might—nay may—be observed squatting by the dozen in winter against a sun warmed wall—“the Mexican fireplace”—smoking the perennial cigarette, gambling possibly at *monte* or *chusas*, or better still, simply chattering, and usually about nothing whatever; for it is a garrulous race even when hardworking. But the Mexican is seldom a hobo or a beggar, and is not addicted to tramping the country without an object. When he walks, he walks rapidly. He does not stroll. But then neither does he walk if he can get out of it, thus resembling all Southern races as I have known them. Yet watch a gang of Mexicans going to or from work in some city; their gait approaches the dogtrot of the pure Indian.

The peon is also akin to the negro in one respect, if not more: the life of the ranchwoman is largely consumed in gathering up his leavings; yet if a long apprenticeship has been served with the happy-go-lucky darkey, the inevitable is submitted to with reasonable philosophy. Everything, in short, on the ranch is just where it ought not to be and never where it should be. Work presses, and some indispensable article is missing. “Where is it?” “*Quien sabe!*” accompanied by a shrug which is the soul

of amiability. The retort courteous but unsatisfying.

Now there was Ascencion, who wore somewhat the air of a peacable Spanish hidalgo, and who was "not used to being hurried." He was ornamental, his manners were pleasing, his English fair to middling, and he was not unkind to animals, so long as their demands upon him were not too exacting. Sober and honest, he was therefore agreeable in every capacity save that for which he was hired, i. e. work. Had I been in a position to give wages in return for a few trifling chores our pleasant relations might have longer endured; as it was we parted at the end of six months, several weeks of which were absorbed by the duties attendant on getting married—an affair which for the peon bridegroom making an alliance somewhat above his station appears to be beset with difficulties. New relatives had to be courteously entreated—chiefly *fed*, and thirst assuaged—lavishly and numerously: wedding garments had to be provided for bride as well as groom by the groom, and my wagon and team were in constant request on the strength of wages yet on the dim horizon. For me also was the privilege of presenting an adobe home to the newly weds. But then I could subsist meanwhile on the cheap fare of hope—which proved, as is not uncommon, a delusion. Whether Ascencion found the effort of living up to his bride too great an effort, or whether I was merely reaping the everyday fruits of kindnesses bestowed, is uncertain, but it was certain that the toil of my peon became more intermittent,

if possible, and that better than ever he loved to sit in the shadow of his own fig-tree and gaze with primeval calm upon stationary horses hitched to a stationary plow. Thus we parted. And as Ascension belonged to my tenderfoot days he has never been duplicated on my estate.

As an experienced employer of labor—and here is it amiss to question if the employer has not something to learn in this employing business even as has the employed?—I have never believed in demonstrative supervision. Wiser is it, mayhap, to “keep eyes in the back of the head.” Thus: one day I stood on the mounting block in front of my Southern home, waiting for my husband. As men usually have to be waited for, I was unperturbed. (Here it is best to pause and nail my colors to the mast ere some indignant masculine hand tears them down.) Our faithful William stood at the heads of the blooded team, and my roving glance lit casually on the silken quarters of the near mare. “Now Mis’, now Mis’!” ejaculated William, stammering in his haste as his custom was—“Dat ain’t no dust on Lemma! Sw’ar to gracious dat ain’t no dust on dat mah!” My husband joining me at the moment we both laughed, but on my return to Aunt Hannah in the kitchen she delivered herself as follows: “William, he come in mah kitchen and says ‘Mis’, she got eyes in de back of her haid!’ An’ ef dat ain’t gospel truf too!”

In New Mexico, also, many words may prove deleterious rather than helpful in that matter of labor. I prefer to abstain from hovering over my workers,

but instead have a way of appearing quite unexpectedly, and if the job is not being done to suit me have the difficulty rectified without unpleasantness on either side. It seems to me that labor of every color has a weakness for being trusted—up to a certain point. But if I have two or more men working I see to it that they are widely separated, though to arrange Mexicans beyond the limits of shouting distance in our thin atmosphere is scarcely possible. But shouting makes a noise, and the Señora is known to possess ears as well as eyes.

Juan, my champion worker, never fails to find me men who are middling to good as to industry; and he always serves me first when laborers are in demand. One day, having already engaged himself to a newcomer before I put in my plea, he promised to send me a good man to clean my acequias. Early the next morning I sallied forth to find that, as usual, he had kept his word. An hour or so later, greatly to my surprise, I discovered Juan himself, shoveling out dirt and weeds at express speed. Naturally I exclaimed.

"*Si*, Señora. That Señor Z. knows nothing. I will not work for any man who stands over me and watches all the time—no, Señora!"

Thus was merit rewarded. I did not watch Juan, and for me he accomplished marvels.

Ricardo, the boy, who served me loyally many years, had more than a touch of *poco tiempo* in his make-up. Should my pent emotions suddenly explode in the loud remonstrance—"O, hurry, hurry, hurry, Ricardo, or I shall go crazy!" the sense of

humor so often possessed by his race causes this exhibition of speed mania to appeal to him as a good joke, and he snatches up the handles of the wheelbarrow and goes off at a round trot, continuing thus to trot until the work is done.

The peon's forbears at the coming of the Spaniards were not only skilled but industrious, as all history proves, and any laziness evinced by the modern peon is set down to mismanagement by government and church. The effect of climate it surely is *not!* The very idea is ludicrous, and not borne out by facts.

Let us turn from personal experiences with the peon to read the words of an American long resident in Mexico; and neither is he alone in his opinion, being upheld by several residents in both New and old Mexico. I myself have heard those who have employed peon labor in numbers and for half a lifetime declare that the Mexican will give his very life for white men who know how to win his esteem and confidence.

"The Mexican peon is naturally a faithful, loyal associate and helper; he is trustworthy; he believes it to be a priceless honor to be confided in. . . . All men, however, irrespective of nationality, if distrusted and watched will frequently let the watcher have what he is looking for."

In respect to business arrangements, verbal contracts and so forth I myself have found the peon more to be depended upon than many a person of other nationality. On first coming to this Valley I was assured by Americans, who understood the

Mexican as well as any white men can understand the soundless depths of alien and colored races, that this would be the case. As for the common accusation that Mexicans never keep their promises, for a number of years I was in a position to state that Mexicans kept their word as often as Americans did; unfortunately since being brought into contact with the youthful "educated" peon I have misgivings on that score. In regard to paying their debts, our resident in Mexico has more to say:

"I have trusted hundreds of Mexicans in small accounts. . . . Some have not paid; some could not pay and continue to eat. In hundreds of cases the debtors would appear sooner or later and take from their bosom the petty slip of account, where they had guarded it with religious care for months until in their narrow lives the small sum would be saved for payment."

At this point it may well be quoted: He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.

Furthermore I have been assured by those in charge of hospitals, and also by medical men, that the Mexican, rich or poor, pays his bills far more promptly and willingly than does the American; and here again the numerous exceptions do but prove the rule.

The unspeakable conditions prevailing in Mexico—the cruelties, the outrageous oppression, vouched for by competent witnesses, the long bondage of peonage—could result but in one way: Revolution. It is one of the tragedies of modern times that revolt, though absolutely unavoidable, has done noth-

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ing for the once desirable peon but transform him into a lawless bandit dreaded and even hated by our New Mexican peons, yet how profoundly to be pitied! Sentimentality plays no part in such compassion; for it has its source in knowledge of facts.

Not long ago I heard Mexican labor lauded by South Eastern Texans and greatly preferred to that of (southern) Italians.

"The disparagement of the Mexican character so commonly indulged in was long ago concentrated in the typical designation of them as 'greaser', a term intended to be disparaging and insulting." The like spirit of intolerance toward the peon, taking it for granted that he is "no good," prevails overmuch in our Valley, and the newcomer would find it to his advantage to meet the peon at least half way. He will lose nothing by so doing and may possibly gain something.

As for the peon's thievish propensities, I regret to be unable to join the loud chorus of accusation against him. Perhaps I have suffered in small measure because of a lengthy acquaintance with the darkey and his little ways, although neither Mexican nor darkey has so far equalled the "swiping" accomplished by fairer "help." And thief or no, it must never be forgotten that the peon is the ever convenient Cat-that-steals-the-cream; of course no one but a Mexican would steal! Possessions of great or little value have, I admit, passed beyond my ken, but without exception the abductor in the case of valuables has been a white person. It should be added, nevertheless, that the peon has a well nigh

uncontrollable passion for blankets—Navajos for choice—but a stable blanket will serve. On cold nights when my horses were free to leave their shelter and roam the fields if they preferred, each horse wore a blanket made fast with surcingle and strap, and more than once, the animals being used to handling, there appeared in the morning a stripped horse. But Ricardo, on his own suggestion, soon settled this matter by “laying for” the thief, armed with my shotgun.

In my ranching years there could be no question as to the desirability of Mexican labor for the lone woman. The “I’m much better than you are” of the white man or woman made a sorry showing beside the peon’s courtesy to the Señora for whom he worked; he carried himself, in short, and generally speaking, with the courtesy of the gentleman born, poor and uneducated though he was. He would also work more faithfully for the Unprotected Female than he would for the Protected—generally speaking again. It may further be affirmed that no woman could have passed weeks and months alone on a farm in the Black Belt without molestation. Yet this I did, and without near neighbors, though I did not remain alone in my house at night, that not being deemed quite wise. Another ranchwoman, living a couple of miles beyond me, drove herself home for years after dark if so disposed, and was never so much as startled. Even in later times, with its alarms of border raids, the general opinion in our Valley inclined to absolute faith in our Valley

Mexicans, and up to date this faith has not been found wanting.

In using the past tense in regard to the peon, this is not to say that there are no good peons left, or that the "educated" peon is invariably inferior. But neither education—if it can be called such—nor mission schools have affected in the slightest degree the Mexican's partiality for following the line of least resistance: he is a better liar, especially in his youth, than the very darkey himself. This may be saying much, yet not too much. The latter is hampered by the knowledge that any Southerner, or one who has lived long in the South, is capable of discriminating and eliminating even whilst lending a kindly ear to African eloquence. This is not to say that a beneficent tolerance checks the eloquence, but the slightest expression of disbelief may cause a certain embarrassment. The Mexican, on the contrary, is never embarrassed; he either entertains a faith absolutely sublime in the American's credulity and so glides unperturbed upon his errant course, or he is more stupid than our old friend the "cullud pusson": the latter, I incline to believe. The American's sole hope lies in a firm but silent disregard of the peon's assertions. I have known truthful Mexicans, but not many. To differ from the average peon is vain; with the darkey, as aforesaid, some effect may be produced. For instance: after listening for long minutes to a random flow of words from an intelligent and faithful colored servant, I sighed wearily—"O, William, why *will* you lie so!" In a moment William's gait

broke, he stammered—"Now Mis', now Mis', I doan' know why I lies! I jes' *lies!*"

An Australian of mark and prominence has recently declared "that it would be better for the future world if each race should develop along its own distinctive lines." Never was there a truer word! Provided, of course, that every and each race has its distinctive lines. The Mexican race down to the humblest peon is distinguished by the fact that it possesses artistic tendencies and often talents far in advance of the race which is in most other respects its superior. The same may be said of other foreign races, but we are dealing now with the Mexican. To Americanize him in the highest sense is one thing; cheap Americanization quite another. Unfortunately the ignorant and not often over alert young peon is inclined to imitate the Citizen Genêt type of American—that outrageous offshoot of so-called civilization severely rebuked time and again by Washington himself. Of Citizen Genêts we already possess a surplus without adding to their number with the erstwhile courteous Mexican, whose up-to-date manners are enough to make their angels weep; indeed it is permissible to wonder in one's darkest hours if they have any angels? On the Citizen Genêt model then "educated" Mexican youth too often models itself—a double aggravation because in the case of the peon bad manners are such an ostentatious demoralization. Native courtesy, untampered with, is so balmy and blessed a thing, holding also the additional charm of being inbred and guiltless of either servility or fawning.

One of two wellbred young Americans, discussing a certain incident in my presence, concluded the recital with a comprehensive wave of the hand and the ejaculation—"Well, you know what the educated Mexican girl is!"

Pity 'tis, 'tis true!

The peon, not unlike the negro, who has benefited to any marked extent, or who has "been made over" by the superficial and overcrowded instruction thrust upon him by the public school, is "different," i. e. is not a representative specimen. All through the pedagogic world the idle struggle to force the round ball into the square hole persists, although the trenchant criticisms, prompted by the early failures in training camps for American officers and which failures were in large measure laid to our public school system, have aroused that noble discontent which makes for the only progress worth while. Illiteracy, it is discovered, is far from being confined to aliens and still have we to learn, or discover, that instruction is not education—distinctly not—and that it is just here that the Home must supplement the School. How often does it? So far as the peon is concerned, it stands to reason that he must learn to read and write our language, but to educate him "*away from*" (as has been aptly remarked) his natural bent is surely a blunder. The Mexican public school child discards the useful lore of his parents handed down through the ages, their skill in ways he wots not of, their capacity for loyalty and affection, their courtesy aforementioned, and with a head not conspicuous for brilliancy woe-

fully crammed with perfectly useless lumber, leaves school with his native tastes undeveloped or utterly swamped—in other words, he is neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring. This may be considered an extreme case, but such extreme cases are quite common. If Education for Citizenship, and the Worthy Use of Leisure, often cry vainly for a hearing where American youth is in question, how much more so is this the case with an alien race?

The Mexican girl, whatever may be said to the contrary by those who do not know how to approach her, has an undeveloped talent for home-making; her inherited love for the beautiful renders her, I have been told by heads of dressmaking establishments, an invaluable seamstress; in the florist line she is born to excel. Training would make her a good nurse, and among her feminine elders expert *masseuses* of a skill inherited from the Indians, may still be found. Both sexes are almost passionately musical, though one regrets to perceive a decline in this passion among the "educated" young peons. A correct ear, however, and a love of good music—when not perverted by cheap associations,—are still constantly to be met with. A young peon who could neither read nor speak English was helping me clean house one Spring day, and his eyes lighting on my Victrola, he exclaimed—"Oh, and do you love Caruso? How many of his records have you? I saved my money and bought with it a Victrola for my mother, and with every cent more I save I buy Caruso!" And then lend a shrinking ear to the raucous and terrible outcries

projected into the open by many an American's "talking machine!"

Yet even those who entertain the kindest feelings toward the Mexican must perforce acknowledge that the race possesses certain trying characteristics. (What of our own race? Is it free from human blemish?) To me, personally, the Mexican girl, and in a lesser degree the boy, is but in one respect exasperating beyond endurance. No matter how dependable, intelligent and sensible one's hand-maiden may be as a soloist, let company in the shape of visiting girl friends arrive, and she drops everything, throws courtesy and decency to the winds and becomes for the nonce a giggling, nay gibbering idiot. The house may burn down for all she cares, this dependable maiden, and she runs shrieking off with her friends, to return only when the crazy spell has spent itself. It is well, therefore, to accord her gratefully all the "afternoons off" she desires, for thus may you be sure of peace in your home. This stricture applies solely to the "educated" Mexican; in former days home training prevailed in the Mexican adobe, and such discourtesies were unknown.

It must be persistently repeated, for it is so often forgotten, that in ancient and alien races there are depths that no mere modern white person can ever hope to sound, subconscious memories and heritages which shape our efforts to their ends, not to ours. But when time, opportunity and financial conditions permit, the mass of Mexican peons with whom we are so closely associated will undoubtedly become

better American citizens by having their special needs considered, their special tendencies developed, whether by technical schools, manual training or whatever form of genuine education may be deemed by the best authorities suitable.

And now to dip once more into the past as represented by some dozen or more years ago.

There came a summer in which Juan brought his little family to dwell in the rear of the big ranch house for my protection. Juan is the owner of a temper, though never "turning it loose" in my presence, near as he shaved that catastrophe on one occasion. He is quick to resent from an American any treatment not in accordance with his own notions of etiquette, but toward me his unaffected courtesy never failed. And it is fair to add that in the six or seven months he had his abode beneath my roof I never heard his voice raised in anger either when addressing wife or children or the old woman temporarily his guest.

The agricultural Mexican—and agriculture is the avocation in which he is at his best—is for the most part a good husband and father, relative and friend, unless he is in his cups, an event which takes place too often. But Juan is never in them, and the strong family affection characteristic of the peon unspoiled by city life is in his family very much in evidence. With justifiable pride Juan remarks—"I used to drink like those others do, but it doesn't pay. I drink a little—*si*, a very little—every day. Now Luciano, he keeps a pitcher of wine by his bedside. If he wakes in the night he takes a drink

therefore you see how things are with him!" I do see, every week.

It is pretty to watch the two small boys run to meet Juan returning from work, and while each little hand is clasped in that of the father to hear him question them thus:

"Have the *muchachitos* been good today? Have they gathered wood for *la Mama*?"—and so forth.

It should be further adduced that Mexicans in general are good to each other in trouble or sickness.

The vicious drop in the blood where domestic animals are in question crops out, however, even in pleasing families like that of Juan. Pancho, the littlest boy, is a terror! No sentient thing escapes his diabolical handling. Ricardo, who adores animals, is bitter in his denunciations of the small sinner.

"I cannot leave my pony tied to a tree when Pancho is around!"

One day I took Pancho under advisement, his father standing by, tolerant and amused, and in awesome words described the tortures I would inflict upon him if ever again he tortured Ricardo's pony or his mother's chickens (for some reason he kept his infamous paws off my livestock) and thus temporarily cured him. Several years after this incident I chanced to come upon Pancho, a grown boy, working for friends of mine. He recognized me immediately, and lifting his hat in the courteous peon manner, held out his hand. As we "shook" and exchanged greetings, a blush rose to his somewhat fair countenance, and he made it clear that he

had not forgotten another interview of a less agreeable character.

To behold the typical peon handling a work team and to remain unmoved, one must be either a stoic or—well, something worse. Yet I have found by experience that the peon can be vastly improved in this respect—by example, by appealing to his pride and by yet other means. But the peon comes by his cruelty by right of inheritance; this cannot be said of the white man. That the highest form of civilization is not compatible with hardness of heart toward animals is a truth which takes long to impress itself on new communities, and consideration for the welfare or susceptibilities of dumb and dependent creatures is even to this day often looked on askance by the majority, be they white or brown. Therefore it may be opined that the “cruel” Mexican has a scarcity of what are styled “good examples” by which to benefit.

To go back to Juan as an inmate of my house. On such evenings as I rested quietly on my front porch, a little dog on either side and a big one at my feet, peace reigned, despite the proximity of seven persons. Through the brown tranquillity of twilight the cheap jew’s-harp at the father’s lips blended harmoniously with the low songs of mother and children, seated on the hard adobe ground back of the house. This mode of spending the evening after the day’s work might be that queer, somewhat indefinite thing “un-American”, but it struck more sweetly on the ear of the solitary listener than the whoops of civilization at play. Not that I have any

objection to the noise of "kids" in its place, but it is peculiarly out of place in the hush of evening characteristic of our Land of Mystery.

And now to tell of the solitary instance of Juan coming near to losing his temper with me; because he has been in my employ a long time he begins to believe he may control certain matters, after the manner of faithful servitors. But Ricardo has also worked long for me—the half Yaqui boy of the cameo-like profile, whose mother is of the breed of whom it has been said that one such Indian is equal to three Mexicans. Ricardo's (Mexican) attacks of *poco tiempo* are outweighed by his excellent mental equipment and, most surprising trait of all, devotion to animals. The father of Ricardo is a little sawed-off Mexican peon of limited brain power.

One afternoon arrived Juan on my stage, very evidently "seeing red".

"Señora, that boy must go this night! By morning I will find you a better boy."

"What is the trouble, Juan?"

"He meets Jesuscita at the pump!"

Jesuscita is Juan's thirteen year old daughter in short frocks and pigtail, who is already considered too old to travel to town unless accompanied by one or both parents. Also she is comely. By chance I had witnessed that brief primal meeting at the pump, a piece of noonday innocence; for Ricardo lives on his father's ranch.

"And what of that, Juan! Ricardo lifts his sombrero to a pretty child and wishes her a respectful Good Day."

"He must go, Señora! I will drive him off this ranch with my gun!"

Juan's voice is raised with a threat in it, so I rise to my feet and the occasion: just here forbearance is not the better part. To lose Juan would spell calamity, but as with the negro so with the peon: face the music and take chances!

"Juan! I shall not send Ricardo away because he has once spoken with Jesuscita at the pump! Neither do I permit you to drive him off my ranch with your gun! My ranch, Juan—sabe?"

Seconds of agonizing suspense! Would Juan "fire" himself? He was looking down, shuffling his moccasined feet in the dust. Finally he spoke, sullen but submissive.

"*Si, Señora . . .* But will you speak to Ricardo?"

I will. I do. And as Ricardo, his Yaqui blood to the contrary, is not precisely daring, all goes well.

To close with one more anecdote.

Manuel is a good neighbor, but he has a wild craze for water gates. As nothing availed to curb it I devised a method for chaining the gates in the ditches. Thereafter I slept in peace. Manuel is a good farmer, owns moreover many head of stock, and greatest of treasures a bosque; he cannot be in pressing need of firewood.

It is an error of judgment to inquire of pilferers of whatsoever color whether they took this or the other. Be very sure of your facts—then go ahead!

"Manuel" I remarked mildly one morning, "Why do you take my water gates?"

Assailed thus unawares, and having believed

maybe in common with some of my whiter neighbors that the Señora is an Easy Mark, Manuel shuffled his feet in the dust, looking silly and sheepish. Now Manuel being the homeliest man in New Mexico sheepishness is not becoming to his peculiar style.

"Well, don't do that any more. Come, and let me take your picture! One of our healthseekers wants it."

Ignorant of the motive for that desire Manuel grinned approvingly, and for a period of weeks left my water gates severely alone. But the day arrived when, as mentioned above, they had to be chained. Yet Manuel is no common thief.

Having alluded earlier in this chapter to the number of volunteer or drafted Mexicans who could neither speak, read nor write English, it is but fair to take note of the proposed attack by Congress "upon the national disgrace of illiteracy"—an illiteracy which is far from being confined to aliens, nor even to certain sections. Many of the illiterates are nativeborn whites, a fact long familiar to me, personally, but disregarded in the waving of flags and shouting of shibboleths. Training camps have disclosed much, very much, that is lacking in our so-called educational methods; the wonder is that such disclosures were necessary? For not only is illiteracy revealed, but the vital necessity for "a broader policy of public education"—so that, in fact, it may be worthy of the name Education and cease to stand complacently beneath the poor little

banner of Instruction. How many "good" Americans, fluttering proudly that insignificant banner, can write their native language intelligibly or speak it without sending shudders down the backbone of the educated American? As for the mode of speech a fair percentage of teachers—but here the curtain must be dropped in haste.

CHAPTER VII

THE INDIAN, THE MEXICAN AND THE CHURCH

"During the lifetime of the adventurer called Don Ruy Sandoval the province of New Spain along the Rio Grande Del Norte was locked and barred against the seeker of gold or of souls—it was the closed land of mystery; the province of sorcerers, where Mother Earth hid beneath her heart the symbol of the Sun Father....Fires were lit as they have been lighted for centuries that the god Po-seyemo might know that their faith in the Valley of the Great River was yet strong for the ancient gods. Three centuries of the religion of the white strangers have not made dim the signal fires to those born of the sky."—*The Flute of the Sky*.

Is there anything new under the sun? Now in place of lighting fires on the mountain in honor of the great god Po-se-yemo, the Mexicans and Indians, encouraged in superstition of another variety by the Church, light these fires to show Our Lady of Guadalupe the way down the Valley of the Great River. Of course she has been to visit us once, innumerable years ago, but it is presumed she has forgotten the trail. The Church makes handsome use of many an ancient heathen tradition, and this represents just one. But it is eminently picturesque, not to say beautiful. For days previous to this sacred December night the devoutly inclined native gathers whatever combustible material offers itself, and when darkness falls dozens of little flames rise into the star-studded sky. There is no fear that Our Lady's feet may stumble. But alas! she never comes. When bedtime hour arrives we

step out on the porch, and lift our eyes to the high mountains. The fires still burn.

Professor Bandelier, the noted Santa Fé archæologist, once expressed an opinion in regard to the Indian which applies almost as well to the Mexican.

"It is vain to deny that the Southwestern village Indian is "not an idolater at heart," but it is equally preposterous to assume "that he is not a sincere Catholic." Only he assigns to each belief a certain field of action and has minutely circumscribed each one."

At the same time, there are ceremonious occasions in which Catholic and Pagan ideas are commingled naively enough, such for instance as that alluded to in a former chapter, when a statue of the Virgin is carried around during the green-corn dance, her guard of honor consisting of naked and bedaubed individuals beating tom-toms and firing guns, all this being intended to propitiate the Rain-God. Their dancing before the Catholic Church on feast days presents itself also as a composite rite.

It is claimed on good authority that all the Indians are believers in magic and witchcraft, and the bulk of the Mexicans in witchcraft. In the large Indian pueblos in close touch with Americans nothing but the near presence of white people has more than once prevented wholesale uprisings against "witches;" and even as it is isolated specimens of the craft, male and female, are occasionally, though secretly, killed according to the ancient and prescribed Indian method of dealing with witches. Yet it by no means follows that these believers in super-

stitions are barbarous any more than were the pious New Englanders who used to indulge in equally barbaric practices. In most other relations of life the witch-persecutors are sufficiently harmless and worthy. The Mexican does not often punish for witchcraft, partly because the Mexican witch is a person of lively and retaliatory character and has an unpleasant habit of turning on the persecutor. Even in our civilized Valley the Mexican does not discourse freely of his real and genuine witch—unless in the guise of a falling star she may be perceived scurrying to some baleful interview, or the house-cat on its nightly prowl may caterwaul the information that the witch has found lodgment in its furry form.

The superstitions of the Mexicans have, in certain instances, a familiar ring to one who has spent many years in the heart of the South. For instance, there is the moon whose proceedings govern sowing and planting, pruning and reaping, and all the daily actions of the Southern farming man. Lately I said to Valentina, that it was sad that in my flock of thoroughbreds the eagerly awaited pullets should have proved to be merely an overplus of cockerels.

“Ah,” replied Valentina, “when you set the eggs, you did not watch the moon!” Valentina has lived with me, or rather worked for me, on and off, a matter of two years, but still stoutly refuses to speak a word of English, and indeed pretends she understands none—which is an imposition. “*La luna chiquita—oh, chiquitilla!—poco gallinas, mucho gallos! La luna gra-a-a-nde*” (spreading arms and

hands and opening mouth cavernously), “*mucho gallinas, poco gallos!*”

So many Mexicans applied for slips from my one rosemary bush to keep off the Evil Eye that ere long myself was bereft of that desirable protection.

Not long before I established myself in the Valley of the Great River, our peaceable Mexican population strayed unexpectedly from the straight path of ecclesiastical virtue. A saint’s day, on which for generations it had been their pleasure to dance, relic probably of some ancient rite, although but few Mexicans join in the Indian dances, had been interfered with by the priest. Now it is not well for even a holy padre to exceed his rights. His flock maintained for the nonce a passive obstinacy. At night-fall, however, the priest received a pressing call to a dying bed; but that was no dying bed to which he was hurried through the deep sand of the desert, through whispering cottonwood bosques, under a moonless sky! When at last he was escorted homeward by a band of silent men, a very sore *padre* climbed alone upon the porch of his comfortable house and no doubt sought consolation for chastisement received in a brimming goblet of the wine of the country, of which it is affirmed that he always keeps a sufficiency and of the best. In such cases, rare as they are, the culprits are as easy to find as the proverbial needle in the haystack.

The march of progress has not infallibly proved a blessing in disguise. With the Spaniard came greed and corruption, though for the former vice he surely paid a heavy price. The work of the

Franciscan Friars in the sixteenth century belongs, nevertheless, to the age of miracles. Torn by thorns of cactus and mesquite, stumbling with bleeding feet over rocky mountains, wandering under the burning sun of the desert or lost in pathless forests uncertain whether life or death was to be their portion when by chance they lighted upon some settlement, they hurried on, succeeding or failing, but always going forward, losing their lives if need be—although it must be said that at this, the initial appearance of the white man, the Pueblo tribes entreated him gently and hospitably.

The cruelty of the Spanish soldiery, the enslavement of a free people and the exactions of the Church provoked the first rebellion. A conical hill—one of numerous extinct volcanoes—above the river back of my ranch is distinguished by the legend that on it the Spaniards made their last stand when they were being driven out of the country, not to return for a decade or more.

But the rebellion was yet undreamed of when the Holy Inquisition held its initial Santo Officio in the palace at Santa Fè. Without doubt those infernal rites had not a little to do with the explosion of 1680, although it is by no means certain that up to that date the natives had suffered in person. More probably they were excited by rumors emanating from the relatives of Spanish victims. Now this ancient palace of priests and governors stands not only as one of the landmarks of history, but as the home of perhaps the finest archaeological collection in the United States, as well as of linguistic and his-

torical libraries. New Mexico does well to treasure and be proud of her Palace of the Governors. It was within its adobe walls and towers that the Spaniards took refuge before fleeing from the Valley of the Rio Grande; and here one may pause to speculate whether the Spanish coins unearthed from time to time in our vicinity may not have been buried during that desperate retreat from Santa Fé to El Paso del Norte.

To return to the Friars Minor of the Franciscan order—the pioneers of the new religion—they go down to posterity for what they actually were; faithful, self-effacing and heroic workers, often humble and lowly men, devoid of sophistry and pride. The priests who succeeded them were Jesuits, and whatever may be said of the splendid work done by this order in New Mexico, by priests and sisters alike, the fact remains that their political meddling, here as elsewhere, combined with their attempts to control legislation, as also their opposition to free education, wrought much evil, and delayed statehood considerably longer than would otherwise have been the case.

It may be questioned whether the Franciscans under Spanish rule were altogether responsible for the pest of *fiestas*, although these ever recurring holidays and *fiestas* which afflict the ranchman and woman were originally introduced by the Friars in the first half of the Sixteenth Century as a means of attracting and holding the Indians, and some students of Southwestern history go so far as to

declare that these devoted parish priests induced an idleness not natural to the industrious Pueblos and their tribal connections. History proves that at the first coming of the Spaniards the Pueblos were engaged in tilling the soil. They were also expert workers in silver and gold and other and various handicrafts, besides being accomplished builders in stone and wood, as the Friars discovered somewhat to their cost.

For even the harsh lot of the intrepid Franciscans is not without its touch of humor, and the story of Fray Marcios de Nica in search of the fabulously rich city of Cibola—represented at this date by the town of Caquinico on the Zuni Mesa—evokes a smile, for the reason that his negro companion, Estevanico of the sixteenth century, bears an amusing resemblance to the negro of the twentieth. It may be mentioned in passing that Cibola proved to be no “hidden treasure” city, but simply an imposing and admirably built pueblo of rock and timber, inlaid with turquoises and other native precious stones. The Pueblos, to which tribe the Zunis belong, still assert that the Emperor Montezuma was born at Acoma, north of Albuquerque, and that they are his descendants; furthermore that before going south he taught them how to build their great stone houses and *estufas* and to kindle their sacred fires, which were kept alight by priests appointed to guard them.

Estevanico, therefore, being sent ahead by the Friar in command of three hundred Indians, and receiving en route liberal gifts from hospitably in-

clined natives, acquired the “swelled head” characteristic of his race, and proceeded to seal unto himself many—too many—of their women in temporary marriage. Then as he strolled proudly on his way, arrayed like Solomon in all his glory but lacking the wisdom of Solomon in that he paraded his wives as well as his jewels, he met a fate tragic yet to be expected. A black man hung with precious stones and followed by native women held in bondage, who furthermore proclaimed himself the emissary of a great white King, proved in the end too big a pill for the wise men of Cibola to swallow, so poor Estevanico was violently eliminated like the negro of later days under circumstances not wholly dissimilar. Fray Nica, following after, judiciously tarried outside the pueblo, and made short work of his tarrying too, taking time only to plant the banner of Spain on a nearby mountain and then fleeing southward “with more fear than victuals.”

And like Fray Marcos I too must hurry on, lest the fascination of New Mexican history should entrap me—merely remarking that the two oldest Missions in the United States, although unfortunately in partial or total ruin, are to be found in New Mexico on the site of ancient towns or pueblos which are yielding valuable rewards to archaeologists and excavators. These Missions are at least one hundred and fifty years older than the Missions in California.

Hatred of the Spaniards culminated early in the nineteenth century, as again in the twentieth, in the Mexican revolution, and the Spanish priests were

largely replaced by natives, the Spaniards flying before the wrath of an oppressed race. Religious institutions and buildings saw hard times, even the native priesthood gradually vanishing; and although they indubitably added to the superstitions of their flock, they at least maintained some kind of religious order. But they went, and the government swallowed the church property in great gulps until the Jesuits under American rule took possession of New Mexico.

To revert to our own day; the large fees demanded by the priests for all sacred ceremonies still exists, though in lesser degree. It is claimed for the Pueblo tribes that (left to their own religious rites and ceremonies and secret societies of sun-worshipers still in existence) their communities from earliest times compared favorably in some respects with those of many white communities. Marriage was one of the Christian ceremonies which, during the most corrupt era of the Catholic priesthood was made so expensive for the natives that it was often disregarded. Thus the native fell between two stools; he was neither moral according to his ancient manner, which, it must be remembered, included as constant an increase of the tribal population as could be compassed; nor moral in his comparatively Christian manner. Our valley Mexicans still suffer somewhat from priestly exactions, as before mentioned.

For instance Adelado comes to me.

"Señora, will you advance me five dollars?"

"But, Adelado, you are already overdrawn!"

"Si, Señora, but the *padre*,—it is to pay the *padre*."

"The *padre*, Adelado? Again?"

"Si, Señora, Tomas, he has asked me to be god-father to his *muchachito*, and to be godfather one pays the priest ten dollars."

Now I happen to be in a position to ascertain that Adelado speaks the truth; otherwise—but the Señora is experienced in the ways of liars.

"Juan," I said some time later. "Do you have to pay the *padre* much?"

Juan who had been laughing at the puppy antics of Montezuma, turned on me a lowering countenance.

"Señora, I am a poor man. I work hard. My children are many. The *padre* does not work. He is fat. He lives well, and has all he desires. I give to him—when I must, yes! I put a dime in the box when I go to mass on Sunday, but I do not go too often. The *padres* rob the poor."

The Mexican, even when a genuinely devout Catholic, is hospitable and courteous in his attitude toward other religious denominations.

An individual styling himself a Christian worker was mildly active for some months amongst my Mexican neighbors, all of whom were Catholic. I observed that they took his tracts, printed in Spanish, and gave ear to his discourses with a semblance of appreciation. After his departure I was prompted to inquire if he had made any converts.

"Ah no, Señora! But"—here an expressive gesture—"this poor little queer Señor! He did us

no harm, and it pleased him so much that we listened to him and took his little books! What of it? We dropped them in the *acequia* and went on to mass just the same!"

And if it be true that Mother Church gets a good deal out of her children, they get out of her something in return—their money's worth in *fiestas* for those who choose to enjoy them. Juan despises these holidays, and rarely observes them. On such days wagons roll by from dawn till dusk laden with loud voiced peons, all in gala attire, the women with the inevitable black shawl, sorry aftermath of the mantilla, drawn over their heads, and in later days dubiously adorned with the American made hat. It should here be mentioned that the Mexican youth prefers a purple suit and a red tie, whereas the girls still cling for the most part to sombre shades. They go to mass, visit friends, talk endlessly, drink wine—at night perhaps hold a *baille*.

On the Eve of the Feast of St. Geneviève our Mexicans treat the town to an illumination. All day the householders are engaged in placing rows of paper bags filled with sand along the edges of the flat-roofed houses. In the sand they plant candles. When the hour for lighting up arrives the effect is bizarre and charming. The band thumps on the *plaza*, rockets whiz heavenward in honor of the patron saint; the scene, with all its adjuncts, is complete. When the morrow arrives, with perhaps a winter wind at its heels, reaction sets in. The paper bags tip over and spill their contents down the necks of unwary passersby. Naturally the bags do not

all tip over at once, and the results are at once intermittent and protracted. But as time goes on and American Progress despoils our towns one by one of its picturesque qualities, qualities which made me on first coming hither rush madly for color-box and brushes on all sorts of inconvenient occasions, the inconveniences caused by St. Geneviève must vanish also. For she cannot be duly honored except from the flat roof of adobe houses.

Color-box? What mockery! I push aside my papers as the light within doors waxes dim, and go to the window. All this February afternoon a cold southeast wind has been whining around the house, and now, after sunset, the stormy magnificence of sky and mountain beggar all attempt at description. Tone that magnificence down to the uttermost, reproduce it thus tempered in oil or water-color, and still will you invite but the scoffs of a world more ignorant than it knows. Painting such unearthly sky and landscape simply can't be done—or isn't done—either one. And yet how perfectly it "belongs" in that adventurous and romantic past with which my mind has busied itself!

Crimson smoke swishing across the face of some far off mountain range is just a snow flurry. That mighty pipe organ sizzling redhot above the battered and sombre Valley stands for our own Organ Peaks, in their condensed fury scarcely recognizable as the rose pink, peaceful heights irradiating most winter gloamings. Earth and heaven have gone color-mad. Wild indigo clouds alternately blot out and frame sky-pictures fantastic as dreams. The

western welkin resembles nothing so much as the tumultuous red ravings of a lunatic.

And yet—after such near-vituperation we, being only human, turn aside because it is all too gorgeous, too beautiful. It would appear that the receptiveness of the mortal mind has its limits, that it can comfortably absorb just so much and no more. Or, if this be not so, why the inexpressible yearning, the vain half conscious reaching after these “trailing clouds of glory” long left behind, the mournfulness, the restlessness, call it what you will, when Nature over crowds her scenes?

CHAPTER VIII

MINERALS, FLORA AND OTHER THINGS

STANDING at the entrance of the Pass which bores eastward through the Organs the contrast afforded by the lonely dream of landscape before and the busy mining town behind is not only striking in itself but characteristic of this entire section.

In strong relief against the intense blue of the sky uncanny desert growths give the foreground the aspect of a huge botanical garden; and sloping gently valleyward toward the brink of the mesa the high country shows no sign of human life, except that here and there a tiny cloud of dust like a puff of smoke rises into the clear air, betraying the presence of some ore wagon, auto truck or car on its way to or from range or town. Isolated mountains float like turreted and battlemented islets in the emeralds and azures of the valley. To the right the San Andreas range runs northward, while to the left and southward the precipices and porphyry spires of the Organs block the sky line.

To our rear is another scene. Shacks and houses dot the rising slope to the Pass, and with steam and horse power men are forcing the rocky heart of the mountain to yield her treasures. We stand upon what is in fact part of "the great mineral backbone of the American continent."

In a state embracing seventy-nine million acres

the following natural resources are found in paying quantities: gold, silver, copper, iron, zinc, lead, mica, coal, marble, fire-clay, alum, sulphur, soda, salt, asphalt, gypsum, not to mention tin, of recent discovery. Two thirds of the whole State are mountainous, and nearly all the mountains are full of minerals. Besides the above-mentioned resources precious stones of rare beauty are to be found. Of the extraordinary mineral wealth of the State not enough is known, even in quarters where knowledge is to be expected. The New Mexico turquoise—with which ancient tribes adorned themselves and their houses ere the invasion of the Spaniards—was prized in Europe as the equal of the Persian stone long before it excited remark on this side, though at last so well appreciated in New York that single specimens were at one time held there at a price ranging from four to six thousand dollars. In 1893 one mine sold for \$250,000, and has since paid the purchaser a million and a half per annum. Of oil, in the existence of which in quantity many believe, the time has not arrived to write confidently.

For that form of the picturesque, however, which appeals as strongly to the imagination as it does to the eye such a rock-bound cañon as we visited yesterday possesses a fascination more complete.

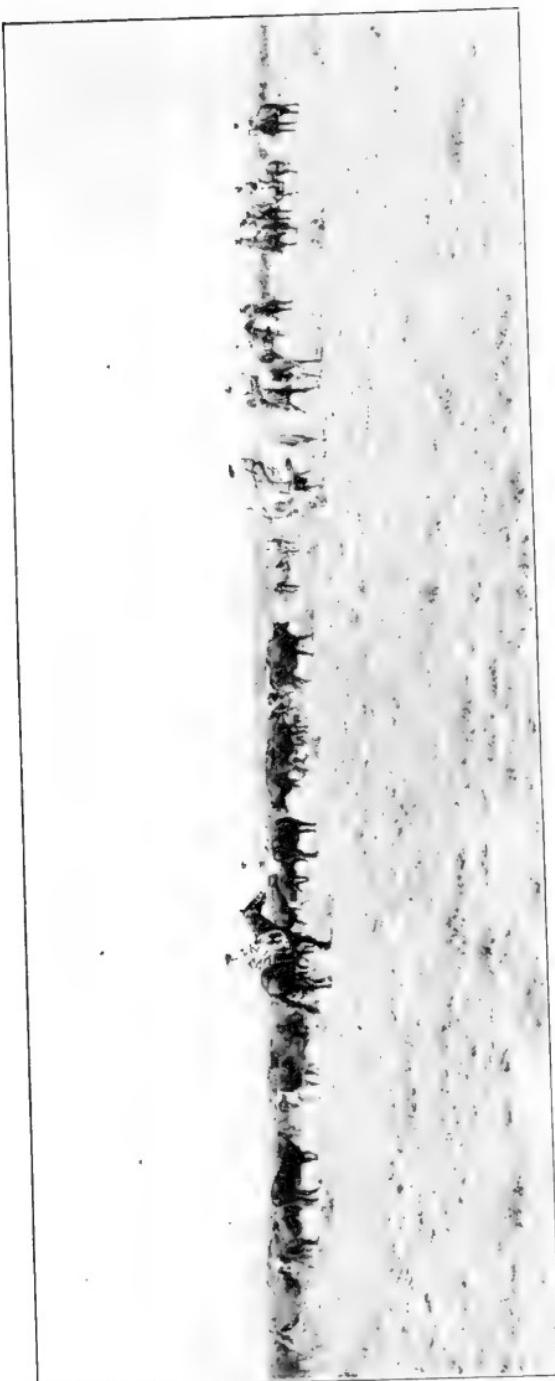
It is mid-May and the summer rains have not yet come to lift the withered grasses and dip them in their annual bath of emerald green. I find myself alone at the still hour of noon. Behind and on either side tower tremendous walls of rock, and far beneath, spread like a blue sea rippling to a fresh

ocean breeze, lies the broad valley wherein we sow and reap and gather in the crops. Further yet is a dream of azure peaks. Here there is neither sowing nor reaping; the cañon is too narrow, the soil too thin. But Nature is at work in her own way. From the bare brown arms of the cacti fingers white and scarlet and golden point to the sunlit sky, and here and there from the stern face of the precipice the crimson blossom of some unknown flower bends a bright head toward me; on either side of the rocky path by which we have climbed the steep ascent *chiotes* lay their gray-helmeted brows in the sand, or shoot triumphant spears of snowy white hung with glistening bells high above the hand of the rare wayfarer.

There is a solemnity in the grandeur of this isolated spot which finds no response in the loud-voiced campers who later find their way hither, attracted by the cañon's well-known springs. The sun-warmed yet keen wind whispers mysteriously in the stunted juniper trees, rustles through the dry grass; otherwise there is not a sound. The inhabited valley is so far away that, seen through its jagged frame of rocks, we forget that we ever lived there or ever thither can return. Sand raised by the breeze becomes the smoke of vessels on an unknown sea; the silver thread of the Rio Grande a calm betwixt drifting winds; a sparse scattering of dim white houses a fleet of white-winged ships. We are afloat upon a nameless ocean, and know not whence we come or whither we sail.

Over the knees of the mountains rolls the "bald

ROUND UP



prairie" of the high ranges, but from Spring until Fall this term is a misnomer. Miles on miles, acres on acres, of gay flowers, painted every tint the brush of Nature can produce, nod in the mountain wind, and spread a brave carpet beneath the passing horses' feet. From whence the tiny roots of these flowerets draw their life-giving moisture no man knows. At this height above the valley, and on the western slope of the range, few trees are found. But the flowers we have with us all the same long before the summer storms arrive to submerge them in bilows of verdure. Our Arid Belt affords an endless variety of surprises, and in all portions of it can change from desert to oasis and back again with unexampled abruptness.

Amongst the botanical curiosities the *chiote*, to which allusion has been made, must surely be reckoned. From its spiny leaves the Mexican obtains the tough twine with which he binds his shocks of corn; and he who desires to wash can find in the roots of the *Amole* soap galore. In more recent days successful experiments have been made with Soap Weed, chopped by machinery for cattle feed. Its near kinsfolk the Spanish Dagger and the Bear Grass are also found equally valuable when properly prepared. All the way across the high ranges, or along the lonely mesa, men set fire to the great torches of the *chiote* to light them on their homeward way, and morning dawns upon many a charred and tottering giant.

A business man from an eastern city visits our country from time to time, and when he does so

takes his day off in a manner unique—for a business man. He drives his car into the desert unprovided either with food or drink, thus proving that desert-craft is not confined to Indians, Mexicans or the Western born and bred. Once he invited me to accompany him and only a piece of ill luck interfered to prevent. It would have been a day replete with interest and enjoyment for the desert-lover! He gets his drink from the water-storing cactus, which puts out its green shoots every spring and is said to hold moisture at least twenty years. For fruit he seeks various desert plants familiar to him, one of which is said to bear a kind of bread.

Then there is the creosote plant, one of Nature's many free medicines to those unlearned in books. Should the old Indian squaw be crippled with rheumatism, her friends dig a deep hole in the ground, and heating rocks place them within it. Then they gather the leaves of the creosote plant and strew them on the stones. Upon these they pour cold water, and picking up the squaw they wrap her in blankets and place her in a chair over the steam. There they leave her until she is cooked and cured. Such is the simple economic vapor-bath devised by the sage and ignorant Indian—the ignorant Indian who years and years ago recognized the virtues of massage, and so well handed down his knowledge that even to this day many a Mexican woman raised in a jacal can so handle and manipulate a sick person that the results equal those produced by some high-priced masseuse.

Amongst other singular growths of this region

we find the loco-weed and sleepy-grass. The loco-weed has a pinnate leaf, sweetish to the taste, and remains green all the year round. Some persons think that the crackly pods adhering to it contain the subtle poison, but for this statement I am not answerable. At all events, if eaten, it has a peculiar effect on man and beast—so much so that in our section if anyone “acts queer” it is immediately affirmed that he or she is “loco’d.” Horses are partial to this plant, and if allowed to get to it, lose their reason and sometimes their lives. I do not mean that they necessarily become incurable lunatics, but both time and trouble must be employed to cure them. Many and often ludicrous, are the adventures of mountain travelers with “loco’d” steeds.

“What’s the trouble with your horses?” enquires one passing teamster of another, struggling with a refractory team.

“Oh, they’re plumb crazy! Ate some loco-weed on the range in the night.”

“Tie them up and feed them grain and wait till they come round,” is the advice of the mountain wiseacre.

“Stop beatin’ that team!” he shouts to another exasperated driver, “that ain’t no manner of use. Them horses has been eatin’ Sleepy-Grass, and ain’t a-goin’ to budge till so be as they get ready.”

Which saying of the sage is true enough. Round and round as if on a pivot they go under the lash of the whip, their forefeet planted deep in the ground and only their hind feet revolving. They are in

truth sound asleep, and will continue to sleep for twenty-four hours, possibly even for three days, or quite possibly expire. The god of horses alone knows. So their owner ties them up beneath a tree and goes to sleep himself in the shade of another—if there be any trees.

But perhaps of all the curiosities within reach, the White Sands are among the most beautiful as well as singular. Imagine scaling a mountain in the Arid Belt, wherein lakes and rivers of any importance—here we pause to bow an apology to the Rio Grande and to the immense lake at this date holding storage water above the Dam—are scarce, and beholding against the cloudless blue of the horizon a line of silver breakers running beneath a fine head-wind. These foaming waves are in truth a vast and glittering bed of gypsum, resembling on a nearer approach some mountain region, broken into deep gorges and cañons of indescribable beauty and variety and clothed in eternal snows. Nearer yet, and the snow resolves itself into sand sparkling like crystal in the sunlight. The extent of this gypsum bed is variously stated, but the “Mountains” are never more than twenty-five feet in height, though wearing the air of mountains just the same. The gypsum is said by some to measure sixty by twenty miles, by others much less. This discrepancy in statement is owing partly to the exclusion of one hundred miles of old lake bed adjoining the sand hills, the surface of which is gemmed with crystals of great size and beauty. The desert wind keeps the sand in such constant motion that nothing grows

within its radius, though about its edge trees and plants thrive in the soil which, strange to say, is always moist. Experiments made with this strange sand prove it to be a wonderful fertilizer, and it is also of value for glass making and plastering. Individuals have long used it, but only lately has its serious exploitation been attempted.

During and after the rainy season, or much earlier in irrigated corners, our own Valley is alight with flowers. In regard to the dozen or more of garden flowers growing wild but a single writer* has alluded to them. The pink lantana is just one of several varieties swarming in fence corners. As for genuine wild flowers, an eastern visitor gathered of yellow ones alone, and that long ere the rainy season, twenty-one varieties, though of course many were what we ranching folk designate as weeds; for a rich land favors weeds, and the gorgeous sunflower is in some ways the most noxious of all. As we drive along we note entire regiments of these troublesome fellows, whose faces, when the summer breeze blows them backward, resemble nothing so much as round-headed and bald old men, with flying fringes of hair and cherubic smiles. My primal raptures over the artistic effect of golden sunflowers upon a background of blue mountains soon gave way before the practical ranchwoman's struggle with the fittest that survive; and sometimes it looked as though I were decidedly not the fittest. Sunflower enthusiasm passed as swiftly as mocking bird enthusiasm is apt to do. One morning a lady at our health resort arrived at the breakfast table in ecstasy.

*H. O. Ladd.

"Oh!" she ejaculated, "I have been sitting at my window for hours listening to those beautiful, *beautiful* birds! What a joy they are!"

Some one responded courteously, but a covert smile was noticeable here and there. The next morning it was a slightly plaintive and jaded lady who seated herself at the table.

"Do mockingbirds sing all night, every night?"

"Not quite all night, but spring is here, you know, and spring is the birds' musical season."

By the third morning the eastern visitor was almost in tears, pleading with her host that he must, could and should shoot the pests; which he endeavored to do; but what were two or three among so many?

Thus did I conduct myself on the subject of sunflowers.

And sunflowers are not invariably weeds and indeed sometimes find place in silos. Cultivated in highbred Russian variety for highbred Minorca fowls they are once more things of beauty; also of utility. Nevertheless hens pick the seeds from the ground in their most finicky, feminine manner, drop them with an air of elegant disgust, squawk as only silly hens can, and finally have to be starved into partaking of the unwelcome fare, the seed of the Russian sunflower being warranted to produce that sheen of feathers approved by poultry judges. But a few weeks of fussing with opinions of hen-ladies was too much for this henwoman, especially

- as growing alfalfa produced the same results, only better.

Sunflowers? Stand just once with me some early June morning at the head of a long, five deep row of Russian sunflowers, all with radiant faces turned eastward. The gold-flecked vista closes in a wealth of green—the heavy, rounded masses of the umbrella tree, the airy feathers of the tree of paradise—birds, scarlet flames and scimitars of blue, or once in a while a yellow flaxbird, leap and dart hither and thither. And beyond and above all is the azure—the unutterable, unpaintable azure—of southern sky and mountain.

Have we no soft loveliness, no depth of color in the Arid Belt?

On first landing in the Valley I was warned that flowers, garden flowers, "do not do well in this country." Why not? quoth I to myself—the same note of interrogation as when informed that thoroughbred chickens would not pay. They paid me 40%. But that little tale can wait.

In the day ere water was lavishly bestowed one had to take trouble to ensure a blooming garden. Soil and climate are peculiarly favorable, especially to roses who, as everyone knows, delight in rich land. But right here we bump against that ancient and untruthful adage about genius and trouble. I am no genius; therefore it behooves me to take trouble. A couple of my acquaintances possessed of flower-genius labor little and are rewarded beyond their deserts by the splendid floral displays for which I have to toil, yet of which I am so proud, not to

say vain. In later days the gardens of the valley improve, yet still the eye perceives lack of intimate knowledge regarding flower habits and fancies, the spots they love best and so forth. The pioneer spirit yet lingers—that spirit which deems thought and care for mere sweetness and light “not worth while.”

I believe that we should have more winter blooming flowers if we did not cease watering with the first frost. I have kept tender annuals blooming all through the cold season, frosty nights and sunny days, by packing barnyard soil around their roots and supplying them with water. Violets, verbenas, sweet alyssum and carnations, all in sheltered spots of course, often do well, and I once had scarlet sage, very scarlet, and ricinus stately and red, until after the New Year.

Every Fall the numerous rose bushes in my garden are banked with soil dug up in the horse and cow corrals. One year Jesuscita insisted that Riccardo must cut them all down to within two feet of the ground. Aghast and trembling I looked on, coming near to shouting Bloody Murder! But the following Spring brought a glorious mass of color to my door, each separate rose larger than ever before. So much for the Mexican method of horticulture.

During my Tenderfoot days another, yet more alarming event, confronted me. The garden was to be irrigated, and when the brown waters rushed in a flood through the break in the ditch and spread madly over big and little indiscriminately, I ad-

journed to my house to mourn alone. It was evening, and when morning dawned upon my woe, behold there was no woe! The floods had sunk into the earth and from tall lilac bush to tiny seedling all alike had burst forth into a pæan of praise. The little creatures were rushing heavenward, the big creatures tossing flowers on high and revealing round fat buds invisible until now. All was well with the garden!

One cannot repeat too often that ours is no tropical climate and that citrus fruits do *not* grow in the Valley. Also that at an altitude of 4,000 feet sensible winter clothing, nay even furs, are acceptable.

Having referred to the absurd notion that "flowers do not do well in this climate," further mention of another absurdity will not be out of place.

For several years I was the sole poultry expert in this whole region, my birds being sold in other states and winning Blue Ribbons everywhere. When a Poultry Association was formed in the city the first subject advertised for discussion was "The diseases peculiar to this climate." Though no longer in the business, for reasons unconnected with these jottings, such an announcement was more than I could bear, so seizing pen and pad I wrote as follows to one of the papers:

"There are no diseases peculiar to this climate other than those induced by the laziness, neglect, lack of intelligence and cleanliness of the henman and henwoman."

(Signed) An Old Henwoman.

To the appeals that the old Henwoman would rise to explain no reply was vouchsafed. For if there is any greater waste of time than bestowing advice on "the general," I do not know it.

CHAPTER IX

NOXIOUS AND OTHER BEASTS

Noxious beasts are not numerous, venomous ones rare. In former days the mosquito was heard only when the river waxed riotous and water lingered long in the acequias, but with an abundance of water mosquitoes and other pests have come to stay. Snakes are common enough, but though they writhe and hiss and stand up on their hinder parts and give us bad dreams, they are for the most part harmless if hot tempered. The big brownery-greenery snakes are fine mousers, and as mice of the fat thriving sort figure among our noxious beasts, I allowed myself to be persuaded into accommodating one in my storeroom. Some persons might have found both instruction and amusement in the association. I did neither. I endured.

A combine formed by Juan and Ricardo resulted in this snake boarder. When winter and the house-mouse season came along together I was glad that I had yielded, yet my summer tenant was a trial. The store-room's adobe walls were punctured with mouse holes, and many a time as I shood shuddering on the step, skirts gathered around me, I perceived a writhing tail protruding from a hole, or maybe a dangling horror overhead, a mouse gripped in its fangs. But in all fairness it must be acknowledged that no cat ever born can compete with a guaranteed

mouse snake, and trying as was his companionship I was conscious of a sneaking satisfaction when he (or another—most snakes look alike to me) engaged a lodging under my roof the following summer. But satisfaction was shortlived. One evening I opened the door to behold him, as I believed, extended across the grain bin.

"O, come, Ricardo!" I exclaimed. "Push that thing out of my way!"

"He won't hurt you, Señora."

Nevertheless I gave place to the more valiant Ricardo. In another moment he was shouting excitedly to the señora to bring the hoe that this was not our *culebra* but *una culebra muy mala*. Meantime he had seized a rake close to the door. Personally I should have preferred a hurried exit, but that being hardly fair play I ran for the hoe and ventured into the heart of the fray.

Never have I seen a snake fight as that one fought. But I draw a veil over the bloody scene. Suffice it to say that my part was to hold the furious monster as best I could with the rake, Ricardo striving to beat down the striking head with its forked tongue. At last it was over, and the boy tossed the loathly body out on the grass—not to die until sunset, however, according to tradition.

"That snake has a nest somewhere," he cried, "and we must find it."

He drew the rake across the grass, then hurriedly made for the pump, overturned the water tub, and away scurried wriggling nightmares in every direc-

tion. For me, I had had enough and done my full duty. And Ricardo was young and active.

In many years spent in New Mexico this was the second—and last—poisonous snake of which I had ocular proof. But as climatic conditions seem to revolve in circles, so apparently do snakes, as this brand of vicious reptile re-appeared for a time seasons later.

Lizards and horned toads abound. The latter are amusing fellows, and enjoy having their backs scratched with a stick, but if too rudely accosted are past masters in the art of simulating death. They are also useful in reducing insect pests and in later years abide under the protection of the law. The tarantula, on the contrary, is a terrific beast. Certain learned professors, however, insist that neither the bite of tarantula nor the disgusting feet of centipedes are dangerous. That is as it may be. No Texan could be found to conform to this degree, but then it is acknowledged that the Texan species of reptiles and insects are more venomous than those of New Mexico. A rattlesnake I have never encountered, although until recently when some kind of epidemic decimated their ranks rattler stories in abundance trickled down to us from their mountain home. The hunter bewails this decrease in the snake population, as to him it means financial loss, but the cowboy no doubt is glad that the new hair rope encircling his lowly couch is no longer absolutely indispensable. For he who sleeps within the charmed circle of a new hair rope sleeps securely. For several nights I slumbered thus, the

rope arranged by Juan for my reassurance. A snake had dared to show himself in my house during the day, and though innocuous he was a snake just the same.

Whip-snakes, which an excited fancy measures by the mile rather than by the foot, trail across the landscape with a velocity truly appalling. They also are harmless, unless the Mexican legend that they milk cows is to be counted against them. At the same time when Juan called on me once to help him corner one, I retreated into the house. Juan's young daughter flew to his assistance, and her sly smiles at the señora who was afraid worried me no whit.

And while on the subject of revolting creatures, bats must not be omitted. Instead of being lucrative assets, as in their own caves, they are in our dwellings natural enemies. After the wood-peckers have drilled holes in the mud walls then enters in the bat and makes night hideous and sleepless. The ceilings of old houses are made of canvas stretched tight and whitewashed or painted, so the bat swooping in and out between roof and canvas makes of night one mad, prolonged orgie. Then with daylight comes Ricardo and daubs wet clay over the holes, and repose is sought in some remote chamber until the unwelcome visitor is dead and dry—a brief process in this climate. One novel and successful remedy for the bat nuisance is worth relating.

At our health resort on a summer evening we were discussing this nuisance. The healthseekers had fled to their Eastern homes, cursing the bats

both loud and deep. Suddenly the head of the house hurried away, returning with a large rat trap. As we have few rats in our country the existence of a rat trap was somewhat of a puzzle, but we had no time to worry over so small a matter. With the enthusiastic assistance of two young sons he affixed the contraption to the bat hole in the wall, and we adjourned for supper—a meal abbreviated by the excited shouts of the boys. Their father scaled the ladder, shoved down the door of the trap next the wall and descended with caution—as well he might, for in that trap were one hundred and fifty bats! To say that the disgusting pests were inconveniently crowded is to say nothing. Now what were we to do with our prisoners? Oh, that's easy, was the cry—sulphur and a sack! Sulphur and a sack were tried exhaustively, and at the end of an hour or more the creatures were still hopping up and down in as lively a manner as close quarters would admit of. The evening slipped away in futile endeavor. At last by some lucky chance the acequia filled up, and total immersion made an end of our troubles and those of the bats.

Nevertheless bats have their uses. At intervals in both mountain and valley occur caves of all depths, sizes and formation, a few of which remain impenetrable mysteries alike to antiquarian and geologist. Through some one may walk as through a series of "banquet halls deserted," others are mere holes in the ground whose depths no man has plumbed. But about the bat caves there is no mystery; they are productive only of filthy lucre.

True, they are most cunningly concealed, have been inhabited for centuries and are found only by accident. To anyone versed in fertilizer lore bat guano is a word to conjure with, and this despite the fact that an encyclopedia of international reputation informs its readers that "bat guano is not commercially valuable." A singular piece of information in truth! Having owned a small orange grove in California simultaneously with a New Mexican ranch I can understand the difference with which the New Mexican regards the discovery of a bat cave in his vicinity (unless it has been his good luck to have discovered it himself) as compared with the excited interest of the Californian. The soil of California requires perpetual enrichment, whereas that of New Mexico is—or rather in my ranching days was—sufficient unto itself. Three bat caves have been found in our vicinity, one a mile long, and thousands of tons of guano almost worth their weight in gold shipped to the orange growers. Thus in one night, so to speak, a lucky find makes of a plain man a millionaire. Over and above the guano the caves contain masses of phosphatic rock—the remains of bat bodies, bones and all—which also is of great value. A remarkable feature in connection with the opening up of the largest cave was that the bats were not driven away by the workmen, and although the entire front of their dwelling was torn down they continued to pass in and out through the narrow slits as of old.

And speaking of caves other than bat caves—just across the Texan border, in which State curious

rock formations only belong arbitrarily, there is a collection of caverns in or between which are deep hollows filled in the rainy season with water. An ardent cactus collector was the first person to tell me of the Tanks. She and her son had camped there often, and she told me that grass and trees grow around the edges of these pools, and that the caves are in some instances labyrinthine and the walls covered with Indian picture writing and inscriptions left by pioneers and soldiers of the past, but that even at the date of her visits many years ago city barbarians were already doing their best to deface historic relics they are too ignorant to value. The overland stages mentioned in an earlier chapter crossed the Rio Grande some five miles north of my ranch and went on to the Tanks to obtain water and probably fresh horses, the grazing being good there; and just because of the water and the grazing many a struggle with Indians took place at that point. It seems a pity that our country cannot take care of its comparatively few historic spots, and, yet worse, destroy for commercial reasons interesting and picturesque corners of our cities, which have for generations attracted travelers. A short-sighted policy indeed, considering how little of the historic and artistic our cities have to bestow!

In view of the enormous size of New Mexico and its as yet imperfectly settled condition, its criminal record is not startling.

"If there were more rain in this country there

would be more murders," quoth a sheriff to me once.

"How so?"

"Because in this arid territory, with its wide expanse of desert, criminals are forced to return to civilization for water. More water holes, more crime! See?"

Gophers are a plague throughout the southwest. Their tunnels are disastrous in orchards and alfalfa, and under old adobe houses unprotected by cement foundations. Bravo, the loyal guard dog of early ranching years, a Mexican with the courage of his opinions, was an expert on the gopher situation and a flood inspired him with joyous anticipations. When the rising tide drives the animals out of their holes then arrives Bravo's hour. Silent and zealous he speeds from hole to hole, and with one snap of his strong white teeth breaks the back of the emerging rodent. His successor, Hilda, the huge St. Bernard, plays the craven before the formidable tusks of the gopher. Not so little Betsinda. She is a true sport. The report of a gun sends her into ecstasies, and the privilege of accompanying a hunter is her idea of heaven. Cortes, on the contrary, goes into retreat if I even handle a revolver in his presence. Betsinda retrieves with neatness and despatch until her plump little body and short legs give out. She can crack a gopher's back with a dexterity equal to that of Bravo himself.

One irrigating day Juan brings a slightly disabled gopher into the garden. Betsinda hustles off the porch in a hurry.

"Now," says Juan, "watch the *perrita!*"

Having sized up her enemy she has her young son, Montezuma, out on the porch in a jiffy.

"Attention!" she cries.

Then quick as a cat she is behind the foe, and in another second his spine is broken and he is down and out.

"I told you she knew the trick!" exclaims Juan triumphantly.

And Betsinda, addressing the eager and curious puppy in her own language, remarks,

"There! That's the way to do it. And don't you forget it!"

And Monte did not forget. A year or so later, when fate had separated the three little dogs, Juan once more brought a gopher to the porch with a view of training Hilda in the art of killing. But again she showed the white feather. We were paying no heed to Monte, for as he took no interest in mousing or any of the sports in which his mother had excelled we counted him out of the game. Suddenly he slipped under Hilda's hesitating head and in a flash had the gopher by the back. In his ardor, however, he had missed the right spot by a fraction of an inch and a furious battle was on. Up and down the path it raged, the gopher snapping at the little dog with some effect, Monte's grip being firm enough but too near the tail, until Juan, watching for a favorable opening, put an end to the gopher with his every ready hoe.

"Gopher bite not good!" he asserted solemnly. "Monte *muy chiquito!* carry him in the house,

Señora, wash the bites and cover them with carbonated vaseline."

Though indomitable as a warrior and, like his father, swift to resent the meddling ways of dogs ten times his size, Monte never tackled a gopher again.

And while on the subject of gophers, I wonder where and how the notion that Mexicans are indifferent marksmen originated? The men who worked on my ranch were all good shots. Crossing the orchard on business bent I perceived one morning a mother gopher and three young ones sitting up on the edge of their hole. To Juan I flew with my news. Down went his hoe, into the house he hied him for the loaded shotgun, and in faster time than it takes to relate he had let fly with both barrels and four gopher corpses fell back into their home.

Then there is the roadrunner, who is far from being a pest, and devours mice and snakes and all such superfluous vermin. Not only so, but he is a beautiful and graceful bird, and many a time I have reined in my horse to watch him skim along the trail, leaping or running, his short wings held close to his slender body and high crest erect. Rattlers are a favorite item on his bill of fare, and he goes to infinite trouble to obtain them. It is said that on finding a sleeping snake he will softly build a fence of sharp thorns around his prey. The snake on awakening is excusably enraged and strikes and beats himself against the thorns until exhausted, when the roadrunner kills and eats him at his leisure. Having once been on fairly intimate terms

with this quaint and clever bird, I lend an open ear to the yarn vouched for, as it is, by credible eye-witnesses.

Eastern magazines inform us that the roadrunner is hopelessly unsociable and will not come within hailing distance of a human being. I can personally refute this as a libel. Early one winter a roadrunner leaped over my fence into the flower garden, and remained there until spring, going in and out as it suited his good pleasure. Neither I nor the dogs seemed to annoy him. On the contrary, I sometimes sat down on the edge of the porch and waited for him. Presently from the cover of the bushes he would come leaping and bounding, approaching gradually nearer and nearer until he looked me square in the eye. Then for a few seconds he danced—literally danced—opening and closing his wings and executing movements so graceful and enchanting that I regretted the close of the performance and his exit from the scene. At night I often put out chopped meat and presume he ate it. When springtime came he brought a mate to share his home, but apparently it was too cultured for her taste, for the pair disappeared.

CHAPTER X

DOGS

He was very happy but he missed the little dog. He had everything that a man can possibly want in this world but a dog. . . . There are moments in every man's life when no human being can help him, divert him, and stimulate him, and he needs the oldest and most faithful friend that he has in the world.

Gouverneur Morris.

IT MAY at once be seen that the reader who cares nothing for animals would do well to skip this, and the following chapter.

Turn now, the hot day waning, from the mountains, and gaze from the back of my brown house athwart the long shadows of the levels. Why is the landscape so sorrowful? Peace stepping quietly should come as an oft-bidden, long delaying guest across these tranquil meadows. One beyond the other they spread, a carpet of varied greens—the ever fresh greens of our midsummer—the gay shimmer of barley, verdurous weeds turning the wheat stubble into a pageant, alfalfa purpling here and there to another blooming, the emerald green of cottonwoods and of springing crops of different sorts. The eye wanders on and on to the river's bank marked by wavering lines of woods, on and on to where the still and solemn mesa leans upon the deep burned sky.

Why is this landscape so sorrowful?

Close at hand, against the western glow, moves sedately the profile of Evangelista, who eschews mental effort and leads the simple life in large letters. Yet her masque is eloquent of tragedy historic and prehistoric, of interminable desert marches, of flight and capture, of murder and outrage. Evangelista cares for none of these things. That her inherited aspect provides the Senora with food for thought would astound her.

TO THE UNKNOWN DEAD

Thus is the stage set for peace, yet in past and present very human emotions trail their length along, and just now swell the breasts of the two little dogs seated on either side of me on the porch step. They also possess a past wrapped in some mystery.

On a cloth spread at my feet a pair of wee pups, offspring of said dogs, make merry, regardless of the raging jealousy of one parent and the agonizing anxiety of the other. Each pup is tiny enough to sit in the palm of the hand, and to sit up comes by right of birth to the true bred Chihuahua. Therefore these little chaps are as erect upon their hinder-ends as tenderness of age permits, and they are cuffing one another's ears with the like permissible vigor, emitting small fiendish sounds intended to be growls of wrath and falling backward after each buffet given and received. Betsinda, on my right, trembles, and seeks my countenance for reassurance with her immense dark gaze. Not so Cortes. His

emotions are of a different order, though agitating in equal measure his finely ruffled shirt bosom. Never does he bend his own sombre gaze upon those contemptible pups but surveys the scenery with an air of detachment, or reaches forth one long-fingered, long-clawed—hand, I was about to say, so unlike paws are the curving extremities of his breed—and gently presses my cheek as if to turn my face too from the silly spectacle.

“Don’t pay so much attention to those wretched brats!” he says. “They’re not worth it. Look at me instead!”

Admonition failing, he steps gingerly into my lap—he who despises laps!—but still in vain. I pull his silken ears and smile into his appealing eyes. But this is beside the question; neither is he in a smiling mood. Haughtily he withdraws to the further end of the step, and with a profound sigh—for sighing is his trump card—presents a rear view of himself to the maddening imps. Sincere as is his devotion to Betsey, and though courageous outside the domestic circle, he is afraid of her and so refrains from more open remonstrance. It may be that he hates the pups more than is seemly because when together we visited Betsinda at the home of her birth and he ventured on tiptoe to peep into the basket containing her and the pups, she flew at him and chased him from the scene.

At last we are all quiet in our several ways. Their little bodies aweary of this great world Montezuma and his sister fall limply to sleep, but not before the former, who is particularly diminutive, has

avenged himself for the falls to which he has been subjected. Wobbling to his feet he seizes Marina by the throat and by the fury of his onslaught throws her and stands snarling horribly over her prostrate form. Then I gather both exhausted warriors into my lap and Betsinda, after giving each a brisk going-over with a pink tongue, allows them to slumber undisturbed. Monte receives the larger share of all her attentions, perhaps because he is so little, and the stronger pup is often thrust away. Now she too subsides, and Cortes, not to be outdone but unwilling to stoop, pushes himself in behind me and abandons himself to the great consoler. As before mentioned he does not like laps and only resorts to them when he desires to be nearer than any other dog to the object of his devotion. Should he lie down at a distance he keeps a watchful eye, nevertheless, on the beloved's every movement, ready to laugh in the dog manner or wag his tail at the slightest encouragement. A sneeze brings him with a bound to investigate or sympathize—in short, his attentions are embarrassing. Such anxious supervision of the scant few who are to him the elect occasionally provokes treachery. A calmer approved by Cortes produces a handkerchief and makes believe to weep into it. In a second the little fellow is on the knees of the mock mourner, pulling with soft, claw-sheathed paws the handkerchief from the face, and on perceiving the smile awaiting him drops his head with a satisfied sigh on his betrayer's shoulder. Thus is the trusting heart deceived.

From the abstemious viewpoint of Cortes, or Chappie as he is often called for short, Betsinda is disgustingly greedy, and if separate dishes are not provided for the couple he will stalk away dinnerless. He should pause to consider that not the most delectable morsel will tempt even the more socially gifted Betsey to a stranger's hand unless that stranger is attractive to her personally. She may sidle and coquette, but the candy or cake are not for her.

But it is Cortes who looks after a certain side of the family deportment. The morning train may not pass ungreeted. If the family are backward he rounds them up, including for this ceremony the gigantic Hilda, trotting between them and the gate, howling tentatively, until all are in place and the train is in sight. Never for him does the far off whistle sound in vain! Then, his band now in full swing, a chorus of canine melody startles the unaccustomed ear. At the place where he was born I have many times beheld him execute a more remarkable feat—that of assembling some score of small dogs and inducing them to take part in the family concert, not once but often, as trains pass continually.

And while alluding to so many little dogs of one breed, an observer cannot fail to be struck with a peculiarity common to all Chihuahuas even half worthy of the name—that of their extreme wariness. For instance, the little follows assemble at the summons of their owner to be inspected by a purchaser. They spread themselves in a semicircle,

submissive as always to the handling of their owner. But mark the difference when the customer approaches! Not that they snap, or run rudely away—oh, no! A certain degree of courtesy is unfailingly maintained. A hand is extended to, let us say, the father of Cortes, who promptly executes a graceful sidestep and the admiring stranger grasps empty air. Again and again this manoeuvre is repeated. In elusiveness the Chihuahua is not to be excelled. “Dogs love me!” exclaims the grieved visitor. “What is the trouble?”

The “trouble” is that the legend of the Chihuahua dog’s origin bears truth on its very face.

Years ago a Frenchman in the city of Chihuahua experimented with a small unpedigreed terrier and a prairie dog. Pleased with the result the Frenchman continued on the same lines, finally evolving the Chihuahua Dog. In support of this story are several incontrovertible facts. The wild strain in the blood is not to be denied, showing itself not merely in the shyness born of the wild but in qualities that partake of the psychic and to be mentioned later. A friend who kept a pair of prairie dogs for pets, and to whom my touch-me-not dogs took an immediate fancy, pointed out Monte’s predilection for curling himself up at the back of my neck as did his pets at home: the fact that every genuine Chihuahua sits up by nature but with the *fore-paws hanging straight down*, just as sit up his kinsmen on the edge of their holes, the gentle caressing ways of the two varieties of dogs—last but not least the crooked forepaws, abnormally long

toes and curving claws capable of being sheathed like those of a cat—also needing clipping if the dog is kept too much in the house. In short, the Chihuahua is built for a burrowing animal, even the lazy Betsinda digging for hours at a time if the notion seized her. Another and by no means negligible proof of ancestry is insisted on by Chihuahua breeders: the pups are more or less of a gamble: one of a litter may sport back to some ancestor of whom nothing is known. But litter is a misnomer; the mother who presents her owner with three pups is rare. In these comments the imitation animal bought by Tenderfooters at fancy prices finds no place. Tiny terriers can be evolved by inbreeding or liquor doping, but they seldom boast a single truebred point or characteristic. Mexicans, or Americans long resident in Mexico will have none of these fakes, to which however, find a ready market owing to the increasing scarcity of the genuine Chihuahua—scarcity induced, perhaps, by unsettled conditions in Mexico of such long standing.*

Montezuma was considered by competent judges a perfect specimen, though as he stood eight inches high, a trifle oversized. Dog fanciers offered big prices for him, and nothing but his wariness and my watchfulness prevented him from being stolen again and again. Even Cortes, not so perfect, had his narrow escapes, and once indeed was kidnapped and would have been spirited across the border had he not been recognized and regained by an acquaintance.

*So little is known in the Eastern States of the Chihuahua dog, its points, breeding and so forth that one may see even in periodicals of high standing quite amusing travesties of the little animal.

Monte, despite the large soft eyes of his kind, walked the earth with that incomparable swagger and style which was his by right of birth. High set quarters, a tail with a double kink and tightly curled make for style. He possessed also the other characteristics already mentioned. Furthermore the judges of the shorthaired Chihuahua insisted on a broad chest, narrow flanks, narrow jaw with a black roof, high domed head wide over the eyes, and ears capable of standing out like those of a bat but by no means to be fixtures in that position. It is the immovable batlike ears which are among the worst blemishes of the "fake" Chihuahua. Monte's perfect ears excited the admiration of all connoisseurs. The markings of the shorthaired dog are also of primary importance; they may be liver, tan or black, or black and tan, but they must be duly placed on the white body; or the entire body may be tan, liver or black. The white dogs, properly marked, carry off the palm for beauty. A set of strong teeth complete the equipment deemed necessary for the wearing of the Blue Ribbon.

These little fellows make admirable pets for children provided the latter do their part, and some of the boys who disported themselves on my ranch got a lot of fun out of them. They will guard a baby, or anything indeed left in their care almost with their lives. But though courageous and lively, they are abnormally sensitive and will if roughly treated either defend themselves with their strong teeth, or shrink into a corner and forsake the ways of playfulness. Some, like Cortes, are

born trick dogs—no teaching is required. But Cortes was easily offended, and when things did not suit him at home would depart, kicking up his hind-legs as he trotted with an inexplicable effect of a warhorse scenting the battle from afar, only with that double kink in his tail with which warhorses are unprovided. Much as he hated gadding, he preferred on such occasions to seek the companionship of a certain healthseeker on whom he had bestowed his carefully selected friendship. In this case his choice resulted in his own untimely death by chloroform; for, as has been told, this breed of dog is extraordinarily susceptible to tubercular infection.

That Chihuahuas are intelligent goes without saying; of course every canine, or for that matter equine, breed produces an occasional idiot, but not as often as does the human race. Monte, for instance, was trained and disciplined by his parents, and according to unanimously expressed opinion they made a very neat job of it. An undisciplined dog is an unmitigated pest to owners, neighbors and guests. Yet the fascinations of Monte were so overpowering that even as it was he ran the risk of being spoiled by the adulation of outsiders, and in his very early years he permitted himself liberties which considerably startled the authors of his being. If by some rare chance it became necessary for me to reprove him, his behavior was apt to excite the unseemly mirth of visitors. He would make no reply except to revolve violently on his own axis and sniff, surveying his mistress with head askew

and tail wrapped in a double knot. Having been told to take a seat this form of retort was not altogether satisfactory; yet his obedience was otherwise uniformly prompt.

Between the tiny Monte and the huge Hilda existed some secret understanding. They were pups together, and spent their large leisure in chasing one another up and down the driveway or running after a ball and quarreling as to whose was the right to bring it back to the thrower. But one unlucky day a monstrous paw descended on a wee back and a sorrowful little dog came creeping for human consolation—not yelping, but crying softly after the manner of the breed. Never again did Monte run after balls with Hilda. But the strange tie was not broken, only grew more secretive in its manifestations. Once I succeeded in shooting them with the camera during the performance of their mystic rites. The immense St. Bernard lay on the edge of the porch, her intent gaze fixed on the scrap of a dog a few yards distant. Step by step, touching the ground as though it were redhot, his tail so tightly curled that it seemed surely as if it must snap in two, Monte slowly approached his friend. Gradually the dogs were close enough to rub noses. This ceremony was no doubt intended for an expression of affection, but whatever it may have been, never was it performed before eye witnesses—that is, if either dog was aware of a witness.

Passing allusion has been made to the psychic qualities of the breed—possibly an inheritance from the wild. Little Betsinda, for instance, who during

my brief absence from home was sojourning with the adoring children of whom I have spoken, took it into her head one early dawn that I had returned, and forsaking her puppies came back to the ranch literally through bush and briar—Betsinda who never walked abroad!—to whine softly at my door, behind which I actually was. How did she know that a night train had brought me home? Cortes was an infallible prophet of evil; his actions warned us of certain conditions in the household which no human power could foretell, and he was never mistaken. When he deviated from his customary habits and pursued an altered course, we learned in time to accept his warning. Both he and Monte, however, were subject to panics for which no cause, so far as we could discover, existed. Flinging themselves upon their human protectors they clung trembling with beating hearts, and distended eyes glaring at some object invisible to our mere human vision, their long toes curving about our arms like the hands of agonized children. On one occasion Monte's panic lasted so long that a visiting physician administered an opiate, declaring that otherwise the little fellow would die of terror of the Unknown! I make no attempt to explain these phenomena.

"There must be something almost as good as humanity in some dogs" opines a sage newspaper man, "that women—and men too—often weep when they die."

"What's a dog, anyway!" exclaims the typical Far Westerner. A dog, my dear sir, or madam, has not uncommonly as much intelligence as you have,

and sometimes more heart, conscience, loyalty and gratitude than you know anything about! That's a dog. But these qualities are wasted on you—the most of you, that is—who trample on his feelings, despise his faithfulness, neither train nor develop him who down thro' the ages has been honored as man's best friend, and celebrated in song and story. However, the dogs of war on the battle-fields of Europe must surely have opened the blind eyes of the roughest and most indifferent of mortals—even here in the West where animals are so ill considered, nay too often ill treated. Horses too on the battlefields—British gunners have many a splendid record of their courage, intelligence and faithfulness, and the Blue Cross hospitals, a British institution established early in the great war for the care of wounded horses, could tell much more.

To return to Chihuahuas—their one drawback is that of other breeds of small dogs. In their affections they concentrate overmuch. They may in fact be considered as a One-Man dog. They may appear to be attached to some outsider, but let their owner leave them in that outsider's kind, nay devoted, care, surrounded by a circle of admirers in addition, they may continue lively and playful but not a day passes that does not find them at some hour watching from door or window, crying a little after the gentle manner of their breed. Months elapse yet this custom continues to be observed. And then behold one day enters their owner and a scene of such rapture ensues as bars description. Worse still, the kind friends are bidden once and forever to

take a back seat, irrespective of their naturally injured feelings. And yet—a small black and tan terrier died of joy on seeing me once more after nearly a year of separation. The French author of *The Story of a Too Little Dog* does not exaggerate when she makes him say: "My heart, large as the heart of a nightingale, beats and consumes itself with loving." Writes also a Frenchman: "Man has not looked for the divine spark in animals. The soul of a dog is not as obscure as it is believed to be." Of some dogs, let us say; not all dogs have souls.

Speaking of the big dogs on the ranch, for instance—Peter had neither courage, heart nor soul. Bravo, on the contrary, had all three. Bravo, the Fierce One, was brought to me on the saddle of a Mexican with the assurance that he came of fearless stock and would fight to the death. True, he died in the defence of my property, as Monte died for love of me. When I received the furry, protesting ball already named Bravo I did not realize what a treasure became mine. He developed into a handsome mongrel, with a dash of shepherd in his make up but minus the latter's exasperating habit of senseless barking. Quiet as the neighborhood was tramps and pilferers were not unknown, and to their kind Bravo early posed as a Holy Terror. He could slip in under a man's stick and drive his teeth home so efficiently that flight was the sole resource, nor was he to be shaken off until the intruder was in the road where he belonged. He made very little noise but was always where he was wanted. Bark-

ing at night, except for cause, however, was the unpardonable sin on my ranch, and even the rather stupid Hilda, the lamented Bravo's successor, had to learn her lesson.

About the time Bravo arrived at my home Peter, another Mexican pup, was brought to me, also with a flaming character. But Peter was from the first just Cur, and Bravo loathed him with loathing inexpressible except by violent action. As for Cortes, he would not even look at the creature, but tiptoed away with snarling lip and tight curled tail; it was a case of Dignity and Impudence reversed. The relations between the two guard dogs were mutually unpleasant, even in puphood. For some hours of each day they were tied as part of their training, but the moment they were loosed they flew to battle, and instantaneously two wrestling fuzzy objects were rolling on the ground. For a time the entertainment was a harmless and amusing one, but when it developed into the perennial dressing of wounds the affair ceased to be a joke. If Peter was tied Bravo was too much of a gentleman to molest him; not so Peter, who would spring upon his chained enemy—and receive a thrashing from me for his pains! But when in addition to these currish manners he took to sneaking up behind my visitors and gripping them by an ankle, the time came when the ugly mongrel had to be painlessly disposed of—a deed performed during my temporary absence from home. At this point Bravo deserves further mention as a person of character.

Peter was suitably interred far up the ranch. On

the evening of my homecoming some weeks later Bravo suddenly cut off his boisterous greetings to tear away across the alfalfa. While we still waited and speculated he came bounding back, bearing his sheaves with him—in the shape of the mummified head of his enemy, which he laid at my feet. With waving tail, and dancing eyes fixed alternately on my face and on the one-time head of Peter, he cried plainly enough—"Behold! What do you think of *this?*" In the end the remains of Peter had to be removed, for it was impossible to predict at what hour Bravo might not unearth portions of Peter and lay them at my feet—which was never agreeable and sometimes embarrassing.

Let us close with the story of the Indian who sought the Happy Hunting Grounds. He started on his long journey accompanied by his squaw, his two sons and his dog. One by one the family deserted him all save the dog. At last, weary and footsore, the master and his four footed friend neared the Happy Hunting Grounds. Then the watchman at the gates asked:

"Where are those who were with you at first?"

"The way was long. Their feet were weary."

"Who is this that stands watching you with eyes that show tears they cannot shed?"

"He who loves me best," said the Indian.

The watchman put his hand on the head of the dog, who gave a joyful leap; and through the gates of the Happy Hunting Grounds shot both the Indian and his friend—into the Land where there is no parting and no tears.

CHAPTER XI

COLTS

ON glancing through these Journal scraps I can well see that from them the impression may be gathered that Valley life is destitute of social joys, as also unacquainted with that intensive culture of Amusement per se, that not-a-moment-unprovided-with-diversion programme, deemed by the many necessary to existence. This lamentable state of affairs does not apply to our condition. But one cannot be a good ranchwoman and many other kinds of a woman all in the same breath, and, I must also confess that, unless shelved (and bored) by illness, I have been able to occupy and even amuse myself sufficiently without hunting things wherewith "to pass away the time." In the Valley my ranch, my household and its human (or other) contents, the healthseekers and a few chosen friends made time appear as a rather valuable commodity.

And there was certainly one diversion which never palled, and that was the training of colts. Mine are sent out into the world absolutely fearless, and every horseman knows what that means and how tiresome a shying horse can be. Further, no colt of mine has ever failed to pull true, no matter how trying the circumstances. Of course I was exceedingly lucky in my helpers, first a neighbor boy

and later Ricardo, both of whom were abnormally fond of horses.

We begin with the mare, who receives if possible more kindly and rational treatment than the other creatures on the ranch. She must have perfect confidence in those who care for her. Prenatal influence is an enormous factor in the colt's disposition, and as all those know, or should know, who handle dumb beasts, occasionally asserts itself in a manner either startling or funny. For instance I owned at one time a fine, spirited horse who was so ultra mischievous that I had reluctantly to part with him. An ill conditioned range horse called Jeff, retained solely because he was fast to buggy, was Major's special aversion, and there were times when we believed he would kill the range horse if permitted. Anyway, even when hitched up with the mare, his team mate, Major had to be muzzled, not that he would hurt her but he loved to scare her out of her senses. He was so full of tricks that he could not wisely be driven single. He might cover several miles in splendid style without a jar, then suddenly arise on his hindlegs and fall back on the buggy and its occupants, which was a bit disconcerting. It was difficult to keep him either in shed or corral, so resourceful was he, and when led to water it was his delight to twitch off the Mexican's sombrero as he stooped to pump and throw it as far as he could. Strange to say no Mexican who ever worked this troublesome horse disliked him; on the contrary they would walk grinning after missing hats or catch the truant without so much as a passing grouch.

Now comes in the prenatal question. The mother of Niña, my star colt, regarded Major with feelings compounded of admiration and terror. Niña's sire was a handsome gaited saddler of Southern pedigree, a rich dark bay. Niña turned out to be an ordinary sorrel, the same color as Major, and had not a gait to her name—was merely a good roadster—poor luck for a person who craved a Southern saddler! As Niña developed she, who had never looked on Major's face, was fully his equal in cleverness and in mischief too, although never combative. The first time she snatched off Juan's hat at the water tub he rushed to my window, insistent that I should come out and witness the repetition of Major's favorite trick. The Mexicans viewed this escapade in the light of witchcraft and continued to treat it with respect. It certainly was not a case of mimicry. Of this Niña more in its place.

When the colt of either sex is some two weeks old his training begins—at least, the feminine method of training which has been proved good enough. He has already been handled and petted, and feels in us the same confidence that his mother does. The adjustable halter is produced, he runs up to my outstretched hand and the halter is arranged without any fuss on his downy head. At this point I hand over the lead rope to Ricardo, acquainted as I am with the amazing strength of equine babies. The boy starts with coaxing—in vain, of course. Mr. Colt plants his slender forelegs firmly, the light of battle in his eyes; no human being shall lead him against his will. The boy could easily lift him in

his arms and carry him, but today we are not playing: we mean business: so does he. Furiously he shakes his head, and the boy squats, taking a double hold on the rope, for were the colt to break loose now all would be lost. The midget sits back too, and for awhile it is a case of pull-devil-pull-baker, varied by the colt's strenuous tugs on the rope. We remain firm, all of us. Gradually the little fellow ceases his efforts to break away, and cautiously the boy gets to his feet and moves slowly backward. Instantly the fight is on again, but the colt is weakening, and provided he be intelligent and well bred, as are all my colts, and is not hampered by distrustfulness on the part of his mother, in another hour or less we are leading him whither we will; but it is desirable to lead him for a few minutes daily. Then comes the more critical hour when he must learn to stand tied, first alongside the mare but soon alone. Two or three days should suffice for the learning of this very important lesson, but patience on the part of his teachers must be inexhaustible; the highly developed nervous system of the horse in combination with a tenacious memory renders pardonable the repetition of this trite remark. In a few months we begin to place pieces of harness on him, one at a time. He has been handled so much that no other emotion but intense interest is evoked, even when the breeching is first adjusted. He is then led around until he is thoroughly accustomed to the feel of the harness, and until the dragging of the traces—purposely allowed to drag so that any future disarrangement of these or any other por-

tions of the harness may not precipitate panic—ceases to excite even curiosity. One ironclad rule prevails on the ranch: the colt is never to be struck or scared, but neither is he to be given his head. Discipline is maintained.

"How do you manage to raise such bold colts?" a prospective purchaser inquired of me one day, after driving one of mine through crowded city streets for the first time in its experience, and that without any emotion on the part of the youngster beyond extreme inquisitiveness.

To which I replied in my heart, but not aloud. Where would have been the use?

The next step is to make the colt bridlewise. By dint of coaxing and determination the bit is finally inserted. Once safely in place this new toy seems to afford amusement, judging by the gusto with which it is chewed. Then picking up the reins he is induced to walk upon his way, I going ahead at first to encourage his progress. Gradually he learns to twist and turn according to the pull upon the bit. Now he is ready for the crowning test. The cart, warranted to make no agitating noises, is brought out. We go to work very quietly, and soon everyone is prepared for the real crisis; for I own that the first revolution of the wheels never fails to send my heart into my mouth, though nothing startling ever occurred. The boy walks behind holding the reins firmly and I walk ahead. The colt takes a few dubious steps, looking back at the odd contraption he appears to be dragging but soon satisfied that whatever it is it must be all right, as his friends are

so calm and confident, and in a minute or so he is marching along, unperturbed but decidedly interested.

The breaking of the first colt to harness had its amusing side. Two young men who made a business of breaking horses were kind enough to proffer their assistance and arrived on the ground with ropes and other paraphernalia commonly used in that business. To their unbounded amazement they beheld the above untroubled incident; further advanced, however, as the boy and I were by that time seated in the cart being drawn along by a pleased and spirited colt, head and tail carried in an airified manner but otherwise "nothing doing." For some days, acting on the advice of an experienced Southern horseman, the colt was held down to a walk, kept well up to the bit but not allowed to break, this being the Southern way of developing a rapid walker; and of all things slow walking is the most intolerable to the Southern horseman, more especially if he hail from a section of bad roads where good time must be made yet fast trotting is impossible.

Meantime my colt has been ridden barebacked to water many times. When Nina, the "boldest" colt of all, was some fifteen months old—or in other words "rising two"—came along the Fourth, and with it the boy, imploring permission to "saddle her up" for the first time and ride her in to town so that she might acquire experience with firecrackers and the like exciting adventures. "She won't scare with *me!*" he persisted. Having yielded somewhat

reluctantly to his importunity the next event was a small crowd eager to witness the cinching up of the saddle. Again disappointment was the outcome. Niña displayed her customary curiosity but nothing more, and walked off, bearing boy and saddle without a tremor. When colt and rider reappeared the former wore an air of pleasurable excitement; evidently for her it had been a case of "a perfect day." "Well?" I queried. The boy exclaimed — "Nothing doing! She just seemed to think the whole show was got up for her amusement. *Scare?* Not she!"

On the other hand, and on the ranch, Niña was the star entertainer. To say she was smart is to say little. The man who bought her sent me a message a year or so later that he would not take any money for his purchase: that this mare, raised and broken by a woman and a boy, was the best and cleverest animal he had ever owned.

But she was irrepressible. One morning, when she had almost arrived at the dignity of a two-year-old and I was busy in my den, she spent something like an hour trying to shove her soft muzzle through the screen of the only window accessible to her. Why did she act in this annoying manner? For the reason that she desired to enter and play with me, and was mad because I was attending strictly to the business of the hour and not to her. At length with an angry snort and a wicked toss of the head she made off. For awhile peace reigns. Presently unusual sounds proceed from the end of the long hall running through the old house. I rush forth.

Someone has left the back door screen open, and in the hall stands Niña, too absorbed with the tasty contents of the icebox to observe her mistress. Nonchalant and undismayed by novel surroundings she has climbed the steps and is sampling a pan of cream—rich Jersey cream—and not finding it to her liking is sneezing it over walls and floor, and ends by throwing the pan out of the box. While I still stand at gaze, uncertain how to act, she selects a cake, and finding it more to her taste begins to munch it contentedly, although spitting out the filling whenever so disposed. A nice mess!

Noiselessly I turn about, and flee for Ricardo. He will be equal to a decidedly delicate situation; for a panic must be avoided at all costs, and Niña might lose her self control if ejected forcibly from a dwelling in which she distinctly does not belong.

“*Niña in a la casa!*” ejaculates the boy.

“Yes! And the icebox was left open because there is no ice, and—”

But Ricardo is already running for his life.

Arrived at the house, he strolls serenely up to the naughty one and in dulcet tones represents to her the larger joys of the outdoor life. Perhaps she is sick of cake, or else her predilection for Ricardo’s society prevails over the desires of the palate; at all events she allows him to lead her out of my house. She will consent to any innovation on her privileges so long as human companionship be thrown in.

We who lead the simple life are in the habit of going after our own laundry. One day I drove up

to the house with the big bundle and went in to summon aid. When I came out a sad spectacle greeted my eyes. I had forgotten Niña, loose on the ranch, and that colts are more mischievous than puppies. The bundle had been twirled out of the buggy, shaken violently until it burst open, and all around, in field and orchard, lay once snowy garments, and far in the distance swept at high speed the very incarnation of deviltry, worrying in her teeth my Sunday-go-to-meeting white dress! And the worst sting of all was that colts cannot be chastened as pups are chastened! One must bear one's griefs in silence. Preventive measures—more easily named than applied—are the sole resource.

Niña started out in life with the manifest intention of keeping herself in the limelight. As a two day old baby she squeezed out of the shed inhabited by herself and mother, and contrived to suspend her small person across a barbed wire fence. The hour was midnight, and but for the lamentations of the forsaken mother the occupants of the house would have remained in ignorance of the tragedy. But on a ranch watchfulness is a good working quality, good ears in particular, so Nina was rescued without injury to any part of her except her dignity, being hoisted up under a woman's arm and restored where she belonged. This summary procedure was resorted to quite often during the first weeks of this abnormally mischievous little creature's existence. Of all the colts, she took the cake in more senses than one. She took a veritable delight in foiling us. Heedless of her mother's

shrill adjurations she would slip past the boy opening the gate for the buggy to pass through and insist on trotting alongside Jeff, the mean buggy horse, who hated her yet more bitterly than he hated every living thing; her adoration of this unpleasant beast was incomprehensible, for if he could bite or kick her he would. Anyway, if she could accompany the buggy she would trip along by his side, paying no heed to nips and laid back ears. Our outfit often afforded amusement, although the public soon became acquainted with Niña and her wilful ways. Once she was repaid in her own coin—stolen—but contrived to outwit her captors and flew like a homing pigeon straight to the place of her birth. Neighbors who had assisted in the search for the missing one declared that she must have covered many miles as she was thick with dust and sweat, and the broken rope dangling from her neck told its own tale.

Debarred from entering the house a second time, she yet seemed to feel that some entering wedge of her own had been inserted in life's common day, and to keep her in her place became a problem. The kitchen was her favorite stamping ground. Should the screen door be left unwisely ajar Niña pushed in. To tear open a sack of meal or flour and freely scatter the contents afforded her joy unspeakable. When I went into the outside store room to collect food for the chickens all Ricardo's strength and persuasion was necessary to prevent her from following me, and when, as I fondly hoped, I was safely on my road to the corrals she would get ahead of me

if she could and hold me up in a corner until she had extracted her percentage from the full pans. If necessity compelled me to stoop in her presence her greatest delight was to nibble the back of my neck. Of course the unknowing told me again and again that some day she would bite me, but equally of course she never did. Few horses are naturally vicious, and even Jeff's detestable traits were undoubtedly due as much to ill treatment in youth as to a bad strain in his blood. Did space permit more than one amusing anecdote could be related concerning Jeff's hatred of Niña. With all her tricks Niña was a lady—loyal and true, never failing a friend—but in Jeff the cur streak predominated over the good in him. All efforts to induce him to pull a wagon or buggy with Niña failed; he would put us to any inconvenience and the poor young Niña to the severest pulling tests rather than pull with her; he was against her from the first hour she stood on four feet. So when the mare was old enough for regular duty I disposed of him. But not before a visiting kinsman had, under extreme provocation, tested the old horse to the limit after Niña, hitched with him, had been obliged to pull the wagon home alone—a rigid try-out for a colt, to which she responded nobly.

"The old brute!" exclaimed my kinsman, after a long absence with Jeff. "I couldn't get a balk out of him, single or double, with all kinds of horses, and yet look at the way he acted this morning with Niña! He simply does not intend to work with her,

and he'll maim her in the corral one of these days.
Sell him!"

Despite the ubiquitous automobile of later days, the skipping "road flea" largely in evidence, horses, buggies and wagons still exist; likewise slovenliness and neglect, especially where the buggy horse is concerned. As it was of old, so is it now. At one time there were just two or three of us who attended to the decencies—that is, we sallied forth behind a sleek, well cared for team, harness and buggy both alike in order. Now it is but by a miracle such a pleasant sight greets the eye. Yet there are always men on the ranch who can, maybe, wash a buggy once a month, clean harness perhaps twice a year, and see to it that they are not represented in public by rough, bony, neglected horses; this does not sound like a very large order. As for work horses—not overmuch time need be consumed in seeing that collars and pads fit, that harness is stripped off at noon, that these laborers worthy of their hire are allowed ample time for refreshment, that eyes showing the effects of dust are washed at night with salt and water, tender shoulders—though such should not be—also washed and tender hoofs greased. How much time does this supervision consume? A few minutes—and often days saved, days on which the horses of careless owners literally cannot work; and when a New Mexican, white or brown, rests his beast, one may be very sure that the animal is incapable of putting one foot before the other! Needless to add that there are several good ranchmen who realize that care of their teams

puts money in their pockets, but the buggy outfit would, in most instances, disgrace any community. It is claimed that a Mexican cannot be taught to care for a horse; I can disprove that assertion. Mexicans whom I instructed in this line during my ranching days take to this hour a proper pride in their teams, and Ricardo in particular has brought his horses to me that I should admire them. I have had work teams in former times offered me for their keep—fine animals but in wretched condition, sore shouldered; ill nourished, and at the end of the allotted month have returned them almost unrecognizable by their owners—gay, sufficiently fat, living refutations of the doctrine that work in itself is bad for man or beast. Accused of not having worked the team, I had only to point to acres of freshly plowed land. The introduction several years later of fine stallions into the Valley did much, but much more remains to be done, even though the settlement in the Valley of Eastern farmers has also helped.

Probably no animal rewards a little intelligent care so much as the horse—not pampering, for that is unintelligent. But how satisfactory to know that you or your peon can lead out of the pasture, without waste of time in chasing, the horse you stand in need of. How pleasant to hear at early morn the horses heralding the arrival of their caretaker with joyful sounds, or if at large thundering to greet him and rub their heads against his arm; and this not because they are hungry or thirsty but because affection prompts this haste. With what

pride Ricardo leads my saddle mare to the door and tells me how she ran to meet him, nickering and holding out an injured foot, sure that he would relieve her distress. How good to watch the horses going readily to their work because in return for it they are considerably treated. And this is not sentimentality, but plain horse-sense.

Did space permit, more than one characteristic anecdote could be related of horses and their gratitude—horses sold months before finding their own way back to the ranch and greeting and being greeted by their four footed comrades of old with enthusiasm, and running to their former owner's hand—but here a halt must be called.

CHAPTER XII

SMALL POTATOES AND THOROUGHBREDS

JUST what connection exists between the two may not be at first apparent, but it is to be hoped will become so. As I linger before arising this Spring morning my mind reverts to the development of my small potatoes into large potatoes. My small potato business chances to be the poultry business, but the same concentrated counsel applies to all beginnings—Go Slow! Especially go slow if you are a novice, if you cannot afford to be in the losing class, if your ready cash with which to gamble is limited in amount. For of course the whole thing is a gamble, or at least calls for extreme caution. Many beginners, whether with hens or what not, labor under the delusion that big expenditure spells big profits. Never was there a more egregious error! Women are less liable to err in this respect than men but on the other hand rarely keep accurate books, so that their ideas of Profit and Loss are, to say the least, hazy. But of this more later.

On rising just before “sun-up” I take a glance out of the window, as behooves a careful rancher, and am immediately possessed of the spirit of evil—or, to put it more decorously, with a sense of futile irritation. Painted ribbons stretching in placid, parallel lines across a sky of unpaintable azure

should not irritate a person, yet they do. It is going to blow, and between wind and myself exists a mutual, though vain, antipathy. So I ride on my way early, in the fond hope of escaping the inescapable. My errand leads me to the home of a rather distant neighbor, who is reported to be favorably considering my plan of putting a setting of thoroughbred Minorca eggs under one of her "ornery" hens and receiving in return for the favor a cockerel and a pullet. This method of improving common stock at practically no cost I have already found acceptable in the neighborhood.

The practice of borrowing setting hens, when my own supply of Langshans runs short, has on the other hand not proved satisfactory, inasmuch as buggy-riding seems to upset the plans and prospects of a setting hen. Having worried her employer almost sick by setting on anything—a white door knob in a dry acequia, for instance—she disembarks at my home in an altered frame of mind. In short, she is pettish and stand-off. If I can persuade her to take a seat on beauteous Minorca eggs, so far superior to those to which she has been accustomed, I am in luck.

My business is transacted amicably and successfully, but I return still in somewhat ruffled mood. I declare that it is the wind, already strong enough to toss my little mare's mane skyward and beguile her into unseemly capers, but the wind is not wholly to blame.

Hitherto I have always named distance as an obstacle to intimacy with this neighbor, whereas as a

matter of fact I am afraid of her. She poses as a goodnatured, motherly woman, and sad to say I have learned to beware of such—in the general, not in the particular, I hasten emphatically to add. In her vicinity I step lightly and avoid treading on her corns; for her sort never forgets or forgives. The impulsive, look-out-for-yourself, outspoken kind does; one dwells in no fear of that species, male or female. I also am surprised that so tactful a lady should blunder into trying a dose of gossip on *me*. Few make that mistake, although no doubt the majority regard such an attitude as a symptom of “queerness.” Assertions bearing improbability on their very face were this morning offered as a pill to be swallowed whole, without question. In rejecting the dose I was tempted to retort that everything Arcadian has forsaken Arcadia except its stupidity: fortunately prudence intervened, and as aforesaid we parted on the pleasantest of terms, though my departure was hastened not merely by the rising gale. Provincial society is abominably lacking in simplicity. Friendship, for instance—that blessed tie uniting man and woman—it declines to acknowledge as a possibility, going so far as to besmirch it with foul names—for the reason probably that such a helpful and gentle sentiment cannot long exist unmarred within its boundaries. Civilization in its finest flower—which is Simplicity—alone represents friendship betwixt man and woman. It would not be a bad idea for the Modern Woman, who we are assured is to “Uplift” Mere Man, to try her hand first on en-

couraging the more prolific growth of that fine flower, instead of being too often the leader in the dragging down and besmirching process. And in hurrying back to my thoroughbreds—such a wide embracing term, me seems!—I fled also from my neighbor's propensity to peck at my cherished friends of either sex, of the feminine gender this morning, acutely sensible of this too common courtesy and perhaps pardonably speculating and pondering—well, I alighted from my restive steed and visited for a few minutes with my thoroughbreds, to find them too somewhat ruffled. Two hens were facing one another, engaged apparently in harmless gossip. All of a sudden they sprang up on their toes, and started a wordy encounter which soon proceeded to blows. A majestic Minorca gentleman who had been watching the ladies askance, evidently anticipating trouble from overmuch indulgence in scandal-mongering, now stepped forward, and interposing his lordly person between the combatants at once put an end to the affray. But his expression, as he turned his high, red-topped head from one to another was inimitable.

“Ladies! I am surprised at you!”

So I go into my den and bend my mind to the pleasant task of examining my poultry books, pleasant because the Credit page is so well filled.

Pleasant also would it be for a successful hen-woman to enter into a lengthy dissertation concerning the whys and wherefores of her success. But we are not all poultry fanciers, any more than I was when I embarked in the business, and present-

ly, after submitting my books to searching investigation, found that my estimate of 40% on my investment was absolutely correct. I will by omitting many details contrive to keep myself within bounds on this poultry question. Good adobe houses sufficient for a beginning were already on the ground, and whatever may be said to the contrary, adobe houses gave me no trouble; on the contrary, for they provided warmth in winter and being kept clean never harbored vermin. So good did I find them that in due course I built more. Large corrals, divided for future necessities, had to be erected. Usually, though not invariably, the fowls had the run of the ranch.

Disgusted with a job lot of feathered objects left on my hands, and guided by some modicum of working sense, I at once committed numerous nightmares of roosters to the fleshpot and then sought light to illumine my hen darkness. But alack! light was there none in my vicinity. And my soul craved thoroughbreds.

"Thoroughbreds?!" shrieked the neighbors in chorus. "Thoroughbreds won't do any good in *this* climate!"

Why not? quoth I to myself. I was ignorant, yes; but a dry sunny clime, whose rainy season occurs mostly in summertime—what was the matter with it for thoroughbreds? Nothing, I decided, and promptly set to work, but with modest initiatory outlay. That first spring I sent away to a big eastern fancier for two young, large-eight pounders—to be accurate—Black Minorca roosters, acting on

advice of a far-off sister who had triumphed with Minorcas and Black Langshans. These gorgeous beings I introduced to my very common hens. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the Minorca in all his glory, I will add that a Minorca rooster is the proudest fowl that steps. There are moments when our lowly earth is too lowly for him judging by his magnificent progress, the arching of his burnished neck and symmetrical tail, the air with which he carries his tall scarlet comb and shakes his long wattles. He can outbrag the turkey gobbler himself! And the Minorca's lordly airs are further heightened by a larger silence than belongs to roosters of lesser majesty; he does not find it necessary to crow inanely and incessantly for the maintenance of his dignity: *noblesse oblige* does not work that way with him. It is to be hoped that in time the nerve devastating shrieks of roosters may be altogether abolished now that a way has been found to put a stopper on the mule's bray.

Imagine, then, the expression of insulted dignity with which these two imported lords of creation regarded the plebeian creatures with whom they were expected to consort! After a prolonged survey, both stalked away, giving voice to deep notes of displeasure. In the aristocratic seclusion from whence they had emerged never had it been their lot to look upon such vulgar travesties of ladies, much less suffer an introduction to them!

But time soothes disappointments grievous even as this one. By the Fall I had a lot of vigorous half bred chicks, so sightly that many of them were the

equal in appearance of those exhibited to me by proud but ill-advised owners as "genuine Minorcas." This was my sole piece of luck—the prepotency of the two birds I had purchased; for every breeder who knows anything knows that prepotency is luck and nothing more. By this time I felt myself equal to launching out a little further, and again sent East, this time for Minorca and Langshan hens, or rather pullets, making away with the barn-yard fowls as rapidly as feasible with the exception of two or three good mothers. But the time arrives for me to call a halt, or my hobby will carry me too far.

There are a few details which may, however, prove of interest. It is brains that count in the hen business, not mere manual labor. Also in this business, as in ranching, willingness to take advice is of great importance. Two healthseekers, former Blue Ribbon winners in the East, were of service to me when I began carrying off Blue Ribbons myself. For the hen as such I care nothing; the fun of the game lies in the scientific end. By this I mean reading and eliminating, watching, studying; raising birds which shall not only win premiums but produce eggs in quantity. I succeeded; but do not imagine, O beginner, that success rewards the person who is not persistent. The climate of southern New Mexico is ideal for the poultry business, yet many there be who write themselves down as failures. Many too came to me for advice, hung around gazing enviously at my healthy, shiny ebony flocks, stood amazed at my first year record of six-

teen to eighteen eggs per diem from twenty hens and that in our coldest winter months—then went away and bought them a couple of hundred fowls of two or three breeds, mixed them all together, never segregated young and old—a vital necessity usually overlooked—kept no hours for feeding, let them roost out or leave the houses early on cold winter mornings without breakfast, and so forth, and then complained to me that my forty odd hens (the greatest number I ever kept, as quality not quantity was my object) supplied the family, the markets and the fanciers, whilst their innumerable hens produced eggs insufficient for the home table. Such people one cannot help, as I have learned by bitter experience. Mental application rather than toilsome labor, regularity, keen eyes—all these things and more are necessary if success is desired. The actual work cannot be called exercise when other ranch work receives its full meed of attention also; furthermore every ranch must keep a boy, who can clean the hen-houses and carry fresh water without interference with his regular duties. In five and one half years I lost one chick from disease. The only disease which visited the grown birds was roup, the first time contracted at a show. With the help of one of the ex-fanciers afore mentioned I contrived to save all my valuable pullets; but it was hard, and often night, work. The second time a splendid Minorca rooster—for of course the ever risky hour in which one must buy new stock arrived—was the guilty party. He came from one of the famous eastern breeders, but had evidently had



SNOW ON THE ORGANS



the roup, for he arrived snuffling. Called away most inopportunely I went, leaving strict injunctions for the immuring of the royally bred bird until my return, when I would diagnose his case. I returned, after an unexpectedly prolonged absence, to find that half of the chickens running around belonged to the new comer and that fully two-thirds of them had the snuffles. Their heads were promptly laid on the block, but not before that of the royally bred author of my woe. The remaining third came as near to perfection as Minorca may; yet I had proved the truth of the saying that when compelled by fear of inbreeding to seek outside stock, the hen-person's future trembles in the balance. As for cholera and other diseases, all alike were strangers to my hen home. I should make but a poor physician for "diseases peculiar to this climate."

Forcing or patent foods were banned. Alfalfa, milk, and in winter ground green bone, amply filled their place. In winter, too, pans of milk were put in the houses at night for early morning refreshment. Grain was fed with discrimination and foresight. The chicks were raised largely on corn meal and milk, enjoying a private lunch counter unmolested by greedy hens. During the hatching process I let the old hen severely alone in the specially appointed quarters for setting hens, feeling that a specialist should know more about her own business than a rank outsider. I also threw to the winds the red tape notion that chicks must not be fed until they are twenty-four hours old. I would like to see such a course pursued with the vigorous Minorca

chicks bred in our climate, who are squealing and scratching soon after they get out of the shell! I surely fed mine, and very soon too—hard boiled eggs and cracker crumbs every two hours for a day or so, and never leaving them to starve in the house at night. Thus my stock was in demand in distant States, because they were sturdy, active and healthy, and never by any chance weak or “leggy.”

A tragi-comic episode in relation to the unnaturally maternal yearnings of Minorcas in this climate is worthy of mention. A premium-winning hen insisted on setting, so after vainly attempting dissuasion I gave way, and in due course she hatched out. A Langshan following suit I presented her with the two broods, for I doubted the reliability of a mother who was a member of the fiery Mediterranean race. The despoiled hen I turned loose with the flock. The highly capable Langshan disposed of all the chicks beneath her ample wings, and I considered the affair settled. Not so the outraged Minorca. For days she followed her triumphant rival around, clucking and scratching and using every means in her power to purloin the chicks. But they would have none of her; their present mother was too feathery and comforting. At last the bereft hen's appeals found their way to one heart, and a single chick abandoned the comforts of home. But to see that hen gather in her prize! She fussed and rustled and scratched for that solitary chick as if she had at least twenty to provide for, and by sheer pluck and energy

held on to it. Yet another episode: One of my birds, after winning at a show the prize offered for the best hen of any breed, decided to range herself, and with my half-hearted consent spread her smartly plumaged, leg-banded person over ten eggs of her own laying—such eggs rarely weighing less than four ounces. As setter and mother her conduct was exemplary, and all went well until one fearsome day a hawk swooped down upon the scattered poultry, and instead of fleeing for refuge as did every other hen and chick on the place, she held her ground, gathering her brood under her wings. Before Ricardo could rush armed upon the tragic scene she had lost both eyes in deadly combat, although her chicks were saved. True to her fighting blood she died; and the hawk died too. But this was not the end. As correspondent to one of the poultry papers I related the whole affair, and at once the big eastern Minorca breeders rebelled. A premium hen set and rear chickens? Nonsense! She must have been a mongrel! I was called on to furnish evidence, which was easy enough. My Minorcas were well known in the West and the testimony to the hen's blue blood was soon forthcoming and to the fact that she had indeed won the great all-round premium. Minorca breeders finally settled down to sheer amazement.

From one show I brought back a somewhat undersized but highbred Langshan cockerel, acting on the advice of the judge when he learned that I had some Langshan hens very nearly as fine as the Minorcas. For some weeks the cockerel lived a se-

cluded life, but when he had grown into a magnificent bird tipping the scales at fourteen pounds he well repaid me for the single dollar he had cost. He was christened Jumbo, and he and his brought home many a Blue and Red Ribbon. The cross between the Minorca and the Langshan is a very desirable fowl, but my ambitions grew with every year. Needless to say to the trained henman or woman that roosters must not walk around with the hens the long year through, therefore the time came when Jumbo was put out to board. On the place of his temporary sojourn no chickens were kept, but for a while he managed to amuse himself by evening strolls with the family, who caressed him as they would a dog. Presently, however, this diversion failed, and one morning he sallied forth alone, returning just as his absence was beginning to cause anxiety, but not alone. No more alone! He had found somewhere a small brown hen and kidnapped her, and supreme was the care he lavished upon this insignificant person. No dainty morsel was too good for her, and as she did not share his taste for evening promenades he abandoned his walks with the family.

I have not alluded to incubators, for though in course of time a friend in the city went into partnership with me and raised incubator chicks, I never found them to be as thrifty as the old hen-raised babies. Neither did I achieve one up to Blue Ribbon standard, and as that standard was what I worked for I stayed with the old hen. I have been assured that incubators are a trifle hard to regulate

at high altitude, and I could not afford to add to my daily cares. I aimed for the highscoring bird, not for large quantities of passable birds. To realize 40% on my investment was good enough for me.

Naturally I evolved many and sundry methods of my own which conduced to success, but back of all was System. I am willing to acknowledge, nevertheless, that an abundance of milk and alfalfa are more than merely desirable.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WONDERFUL COUNTRY

I LOOK up from my writing. What kind of a storm is this?

The sun has set, but the falling darkness is swift and almost horrible. The deep brown earth seems to close upon itself, shrinking, afraid. Angry cloud masses sweep portentously across the expanse of sky. Darker it grows, and cold. The landscape is a sentient thing, awaiting annihilation from those browbeating clouds, whose terrorstriking aspect, even in this land of tremendous effects, I have never seen equalled. Shuddering and inexpressibly lonely the solitary watcher shrinks with the shrinking earth. Then by sheer force of habit the eyes turn toward the East; and there, against the yet clear sky, dripped like dewdrops along the horizon—so silvery, so translucent are they—rise those everlasting hills, shining with a radiance that is of heaven, not of earth. On this night no ecstasy of color is theirs, but rather do they appear as disembodied spirits breathing immortality. And in the heart of the mortal enveloped in the gloom of the Valley springs as unexpectedly the consolation of the ages: There is no Death.

So does one return somewhat abruptly though not inharmoniously from mental journeyings into prehistoric times.



LEASBURG DIVERSION DAM

"A wonderful country" indeed this of New Mexico and Arizona, to those who have eyes to see and imaginations with which to dream backward—nay, forward. Within its immense area the oldest civilization in the United States had its birth—a civilization dating not later than six hundred years after the Christian Era, and brooding with the romance of ages earlier.* To this day, despite the work of archeologists and historical students the "marvelous country" retains much of the glamor of the Northern Mystery—the glamor which led the Spaniards, themselves belonging to the age of miracles, to struggle on, again and again thwarted, without guide, without actual knowledge, in the bliss of an ignorance the age of science scorns—to struggle, and to succeed!

Here in the Land of the Northern Mystery linger traces of cities antedating that of Rome; amazing tapestries, intricate and elaborate adornments of gold and silver and precious stones decked men and women who have vanished into the Unknown; even their acequias were protected with a form of concrete hardly inferior to our own. Endless surmise is the sole result, so far, of historical research. Still do the mountains hold secrets in their deep hearts. Fertile vale and flowerstrown mesa, the desert's remorseless spaces covering generations of men out of mind and forgotten, high ranges through whose tall grass the wind whispers of that mysterious past; the vast horizon, castellated or pyramidal, flaming at dawn or sunset under an incomparable sky—all are dumb. Craters whose

*H. O. Ladd.

limit no human being may reach, beds and rivers of lava cooled for unnumbered years, freaks of Nature varied and various, ancient gold mines so craftily concealed that many remain hidden to this day—cave dwellings and cliff dwellings, traces of cities and pueblos—signs of age-old tribes who set their mark upon the land forever. Cañons green with live-oak and fern and sparkling with eternal springs, even our own familiar bosques bowing and sighing the white nights through by our errant river's bed—all reveal little, conceal so much. In this lies part of the wonderful country's spell—its pregnant silence.

"And here" wrote Mr. Bancroft, "we come still upon a people. . . . retaining many of their original characteristics, and living on the same sites in buildings similar to, or in some cases perhaps identical with, those occupied by their ancestors at the coming of the Europeans."

Whether or no the claim put forward by the Pueblos i. e. that they are the veritable aborigines of the American continent be true, it is certain that at the coming of the Spaniards various offshoots of this great tribal people were well in advance of European civilization, in some respects at least. In the year of grace, 1914, an English writer came with an old idea presented on a new dish. Considerably over a quarter of a century ago New Mexican archaeologists, patiently investigating the Northern Mystery, gave it as their opinion that the prehistoric tribes of the Western States, the Mississippi Valley and Mexico, were of Mongolian

origin, and that they crossed over from Asia by way of Behring Strait which, according to geologists, was then dry land. Yet from a scientific standpoint this opinion was not intended to be conclusive any more than the Englishman's supposed discovery is novel or original. The Mongolian cast of countenance may often be observed, however, both in New and Old Mexico. It is further deemed probable that the mound builders were later driven by some more barbaric race from the Mississippi Valley to Central America, and it is very sure that they were a methodical and orderly people, employing slave labor and possessing a form of government.

But history, especially that of his own romantic land, fails to interest the average reader, so here the line must be drawn, fascinating though the story of New Mexico be to the few. It may, nevertheless, be mentioned that the two oldest Missions in the United States, although unfortunately in partial or total ruin, are to be found in New Mexico, on the sites of ancient cities or pueblos which are yielding much of interest to archeologists. These Missions are at the very least one hundred and fifty years older than any of the California Missions.

As the Tenderfoot extricates herself to some extent from the web of tiresome circumstance and daily happenings, she surveys with mingled indignation and amazement the stout and strong and presumably intelligent visitor who, with means at his command, idles away his time within our borders, abusing the "uninteresting"—Heaven be

merciful to him!—country, and swearing that it has nothing but Climate to recommend it.

Verily to him that hath naught shall naught be given. Yet from time to time artists have visited us, only to go away overcome, possibly, by desert skies and mountains in combination with valleys of a verdure so young and gay that its greenness is as hard to depict on canvas as is the whole amazing sky—and—landscape. At this writing a couple of young artists are succeeding with the brilliant, dazzling aspect of desert scenery—succeeding to a charm. But scenery with us has so many and varying faces. It is not always brilliant and in color is never *hard*. To one who for many years has watched its varying emotions, its daring moods are but one of many. In its soft depths lies often its greatest beguilement to the desert lover.

It is not often that the ranchwoman can fare forth, but when she finds herself at length upon an overland train, it is to be stricken dumb by the complacent know-nothingness of the typical tourist. Unless she watch well her ways, she may listen with bulging eyes to the weird, bottomless yarns poured forth by the ignorant—yarns purporting to describe New Mexico, its climate, products and inhabitants. (With its history, needless to say, the yarner does not concern himself.) The very-know-it-all of the talkative tourist inspires a vague alarm: do we the residents live in truth in such a horror-striking land? It may well be made a subject of prayer that the increasing variety in methods of transportation may awaken the average American to some know-

ledge of his own vast country off the beaten tracks. A rare treat is it to journey in company with one who really merits the title of traveler!

While passing on one of the overland trains through a valley some hundred miles removed from my own, a strident feminine voice abruptly penetrated every corner of the hitherto peaceful Pullman.

"Our Johnny went all through this section in a wagon last year. He regained his health that I *must* say, but the tales he told us of the lives these people lead were something dreadful! Ranches miles and miles apart, women dying of loneliness and hard work, scarcely any churches or schools"—Oh, Johnny, well it is for you that no New Mexican lady got a grip on you ere you escaped to relate such fables!"—"and everything and everybody just running wild. Yet I don't quite see why people we see on the station platforms look so rosy and well satisfied. Then they *do* seem to make things grow, too! Yet Johnny said that all crops depend on the Spring rains, and if they don't come the people nearly starve."

Spring rains! Spring rains, which are, or were, represented by the raging Rio Grande roaring down from the northern mountains like a tiger unrestrained, and bestowing its fertilizing waters a thought too profusely. Rains in the springtime cause the Oldest Inhabitant to sit up and take mild, even grateful, notice; if we had them often we should lose our young chicks, but that is another subject. It is not in the Spring that the thoughts of the true sportsman turn yearningly to visions of

succulent mountain trout, or his ear greedily to mountain lion and bear stories, or to game big or little in the varied fastnesses of the New Mexican mountains, north and south; rather is it in the Fall, after the summer rains, when he sits before a roaring fire of cedar or cottonwood, and cleans and oils the weapons that are his.

And while yet on the overland train it may be mentioned that the ranching district through which we were passing whilst the loud voiced lecturer held forth—she or another, what matters it?—taps by means of pumping plants the underflow of one of those Lost Rivers of New Mexico—a fair sample of the weird streams for which the State is notorious. They are always on tap, and are liable to come to the surface again anywhere when so disposed, or else they form underground lakes in places where the mountains have created suitable basins for their reception.

Not only on trains but in the sanctity of our homes do we receive an immense amount of gratuitous information concerning our own far country. Gratuitous it can afford to be for as information, whether in the form of Wild West stories written by some Pullman observer or hurried “chaser” through our midst, or by optimistically accurate newspaper or magazine writers of sorts, it does not help us—much. That is, we can “make out,” generally speaking, by using our own eyes and ears during a period of years. A decade or so ago a Boston newspaper solemnly informed us that the Bad Man and the cowboy, cattle and sheep feuds, were ex-

tinct in our section. As it chanced a deadly feud was at that date raging at no very distant point between cattle and sheepmen. The Bad Man, East and West, will be extinct when laws are justly administered and human beings' "angry passions" cease to rise; just as lynchings will be unheard of when the proper administration of justice comes into its own. In New Mexico, at all events—which is not Texas—lynchings are practically unknown, or unknown in my experience. But when men are permitted to commit murder, not once, but several times, and by some quibble of the law, combined with the financial ability to pay lawyers, escape punishment, sooner or later the people are tempted to take the law as it is meant into their own hands—law as it is written, not as it is too often applied. Commonsense assures us that there is but one obvious remedy for lynching; but into much bombastic talk commonsense declines to enter. As for cowboys—they will continue to exist so long as "the wonderful country" spreads before the cattlemen leagues and leagues of high ranges unfit for cultivation. With every passing year more fences are erected, but cowboys, even if in diminished numbers, remain indispensable. Did space allow, I could relate anecdotes of the Wild West cowboy, which would place him a good deal higher in the scale of good breeding and chivalry than many so-called educated and superior men can lay claim to—in the experience of a lone woman, that is. And surely no one is better fitted than the said lone woman to set the truth before the uninformed reader.

But here I must abandon "the wonderful country," omit so much of its romantic story—even where it trends on modern days—for fear of wearying a reader who, like Gamaliel of old, cares for none of these things.

CHAPTER XIV

HEALTHSEEKERS, AND MATTERS PERTINENT

IN writing of our climate, that perverse factor which will give you the lie if it can, it was climate that attracted to our Valley, during the course of decades, innumerable healthseekers, not invariably victims of tuberculosis but for the most part thus afflicted. I employ the past tense, for the reason that the number of such visitors has greatly declined. The causes for such decline are several and will find place later.

To go backward. The healthseekers who during the winter season filled our ranch resort, dotted our waste places with tents or sought refuge in our valley homes, brought with them—they and their healthy companions—much joy as well, alas! as pain: friendships which endured until death did us part or which endure unto this day. The memories connected with these visitors are by no means all sad; indeed close comradeship with some created out of apparent nothingness many a festive hour. And the best of them rounded out so to speak, the mental atmosphere, enlarged the horizon by reason of the ideas brought from the wider life of which they had more recently partaken, and the perusal of new books and reviews gathered around the

ranch desk was revivified by the red blood of discussion.

There are some in particular whose memories those who knew them would do well to cherish in the inner places of their souls, were the cherishing of memories not so woefully out of date.

"Aren't you tired of being asked every day how you are?" I said, whilst filling a vase for one I loved with crimson roses from my garden—the red, red roses I always saved for her.

"I am!" she retorted, looking up at me with blithe, smiling eyes. "But I always say I am very well. *You* understand, don't you?"

Yes—I understood.

And men too—young, gifted men, perhaps, with all the world before them where to choose, and who instead have found strength to choose sacrifice, abnegation, in one form or another; who might have snatched from the hand of Fate happiness or greater length of days, but who, because these could only be had at cost to some other, have refrained.

Of the selfish who accepted one's service as their right, the querulous who complained because there is too much sun or not enough, who lived poorly in their homes yet carped at the good fare here provided for them, who prated everlastinglly of "God's Country"—meaning thereby as likely as not some obscure village or smoky city—and shut their eyes to the actual God's Country to which they were temporarily exiled: who when I (myself exiled, though for another cause than theirs) drive them up on the mesa to behold the resplendence of the sunset

sky, can discourse of nothing but the amount of milk or the number of raw eggs they have that day consumed or sigh obstreperously for a New York porterhouse steak—then in very truth I, who was also exiled, found our healthseeker a burden heavy to be borne—especially when weary and making the hard, individual fight.

More healthful is it for the soul to give than to receive, but there are times when the soul is unequal to the large part assigned to it, and personal trials cannot always be forgotten in ministering to those of the ungrateful and unappreciative. Such ministry, long drawn out, drives the iron inward once in a while. Also it gradually became apparent that the sense of obligation, even the veriest fraction, is carried gracefully and fitly only by those in whom some noble quality exists. Dormant may be this essence of nobility, or to the dull eye invisible, but mortals through whose warp and woof runs a thread of gold alone seem capable of keeping the divine fire warm upon their hearth-stones.

Thus we approach one of the reasons for the decline of the healthseeker in our Valley—the transient that is. Of resident healthseekers there are many, the larger number carrying on without let or hindrance various occupations, others for no sufficient reasons not faring well or merely enjoying a lengthening of their days. For any person who endeavors to forecast the future when up against the most unreliable and fickle of all mortal complaints is a gambler indeed! Our winter visitors in the past furnished us more than amply with that

type of invalid who was of the opinion that the country, and most particularly the wild and wooly West, owed him a living. Such individuals were more or less dependent on the established residents, as they looked to the latter to provide them with occupation which should at once support them in comfort and yet not be beyond their strength to perform. It is not too much to say that the residents after many long years began to find these visitors somewhat of a tax; not because our people are less kindhearted than others but because the health-seekers may with justice be accused of having worn out their welcome. Sad it is to have to confess that the sight of the usual advertisement beginning "Healthseeker desires a position, etc., " or the sound of the words "I am here for my health and would like to get work for my board," sent a shudder down the spine of the sorely tried and seasoned benefactor of the invalid-who-is-willing-to-work. "No healthseeker need apply," were words only too often heard, but the fault generally lay with the healthseeker.

These men were not invariably Lungers; sometimes they were merely taking a vacation—clerks in big city stores and so forth, who needed a dry, bracing winter climate. Our people, though far from poverty stricken, are or were seldom or never rich; therefore in course of time the residents waxed restive and the meritorious healthseekers suffered. Neither were schemes for living on "these Westerners" confined altogether to the poor and needy.

He who can continue to give cheerfully and hopefully after a decade or so passed in such an environment is less human than divine, or perhaps merely thickskinned.

After repeated disappointments I decided to try again. During an entire winter one healthseeker after another was given a fair chance. They were not Lungers or if so but slightly affected, and feeding and watering four or five head of stock morning and night (the stock was running on the ranch most of the time) harnessing, saddling and currying a horse or two and keeping a buggy clean is not very laborious work, as I know, who at a pinch have done it myself. Decent interest was manifested in their health and concerns generally, and decent measures taken to spare their strength, but evidently such interest was a mistake; for sooner or later, generally sooner, each in his turn sat back, reduced his trifling tasks to a minimum the moment he began to "feel good," and either fired himself or was fired. Incompetence, from charitable motives, can be endured, but shirking and characteristic ingratitude soon grow wearisome.

The insolence toward a lone woman typical of the class to which I refer was checked, though not wholly squelched, by the moral support of a visiting kinsman. This type curbs its Citizen Genêt tongue when a man is back of a woman, otherwise her utmost courtesy and kindliness may be exhibited a good deal worse than in vain. Here is where the star of the plain *peon* is in the ascendant.

Thus, if one is by training or temperament gener-

ous, many, both sick and well, are apt to take advantage of the sympathetic ear and ready hand, and bearing one another's burdens gradually takes on an air of duty rather than pleasure. The joy of giving grows small by degrees and unbeautifully less. If only we were really as dull as some persons choose to believe, or were really only Easy Marks, we should slip more smoothly along life's vexed and tortuous way. But we are not. When I give vent to observations concerning the demoralizing effects of long-continued poverty or dependence to one more worldly-wise than I, they are greeted with a melancholy nod of affirmation. Something goes down in the struggle—a proper pride and several lesser items. Also we descry causes for this long-continued poverty. To name but one among many: thriftlessness, nay destructiveness. Where I keep a piece of property in speckless condition for years the poverty howlers will ruin it in a month. So it is with everything. They have little because they are too careless, or too superior to petty *cares*; they have never acquired the automatic, systematic habit of taking thought for what they have; ergo, presently they have nothing. Then comes the inevitable whine—"If I had as much as you have it would be worth while to bother!" To which senseless complaint reply would be a mere waste of energy. There was a day when extreme verdancy prompted a kindly meant explanation, but verdancy has long since been nipped by the bitter frosts of experience.

The working-boarder proposition may be said to have died a natural death. The he-come, haven't-

came-yet, he-done, I-seen and you-was specimens of the male sex, who sought the Golden West for reasons quite other than that of the search for labor, are no longer in evidence. Pointedly deficient in the saying grace of humor they are "insulted" at every turn. However humbly placed individually, good breeding is not "touchy," but neither does it enjoy having the nutmeg-grater of illiterate speech dragged hourly across its nervous system. Hence, largely, the barriers of caste. Substitute Taste for Caste, acknowledge that sensitiveness and touchiness have nothing in common, and perhaps the problem is half solved.

There are times when the snobbishness stalking around even in the Free-and-Equal-West becomes a good joke. For instance one evening I arrived late for supper at our ranch resort, which occasionally entertained guests who were not health-seekers but who lingered for the sake of good board and attractive surroundings or for reasons of personal convenience. It was late Spring and busy times on the ranch and consequently my excuses met with ready acceptance. But a woman—to whom one would never think of applying the now expiring term Lady—lifted a "proud" head and stared at me with an expression which was intended to be haughty and "exclusive."

"Well," she said, "I'm glad *I* have never been in a position which compelled me to do *menial* labor!"

Position! Menial! Lord o' Love! as a dear old country friend was wont to exclaim when deeply stirred. What did this woman mean by "position?"

And "menial?" So little did I know that I dropped my napkin under the table and fell headlong after it to conceal convulsions of laughter. Some present were indignant but to me the woman was simply irresistibly funny! Neither would she have understood that I was not laughing at her because her husband's income was small and he in a small way of business, but *because*—as the children say.

There are at least two other reasons for the comparative disappearance of winter healthseekers: first, the lack of suitable accommodation; second, the dread of the consumptive, developed in recent years.

It is interesting and occasionally instructive, to note how the wheel of time revolves. Exaggerated terror of the consumptive has simply come round to us again. In the days of Armijo, the last Governor of New Mexico under Mexican rule, a careful *padre* laid down regulations at once stringent and absurd regarding the conduct of his flock should a member of it pass the dwelling of a tuberculous person. Amusing as some of these regulations were they were scarcely more illogical than a few of these prescribed by up-to-date alarmists. Discretion is one thing, monomania quite another. Thus revolves the eternal wheel; and there is nothing new under the sun.

The advice given patients by eastern specialists, or by physicians landing in our midst like balloons inflated with imported theories—both ignorant alike of our climatic conditions and so forth—was bad enough, and in extreme cases exasperating to our

own acclimated and experienced specialists and general practitioners; but this contagious monomania goes further yet in being little short of heathenish! Pamphlets composed in hotbeds of the disease—East Texas, for instance—are scattered broadcast through the dry, sun-baked, aseptic atmosphere of West Texas and New Mexico, promptly producing pop-eyed hysteria in the hitherto tranquil inhabitants. Suggestion indeed! Pity 'tis that the pendulum of human opinion takes so long to settle into place! We who have risen up and sat down these many years with the consumptive, we who have taken sensible precautions in our intercourse with him and we who have taken none, may have found such intercourse oftentimes very unpleasant but would in all probability fail to present one solitary case of tuberculosis, either contracted or sporadic, among Americans long resident in this section, provided they did not settle here for cause, i. e., for tuberculous cause. The Mexicans, they and their Chihuahua dogs, are acutely susceptible to the disease. If, by chance, an American is mentioned as being tuberculous, searching inquiry proves that the person in question is either a relapsed health-seeker of long standing, or the offspring of health-seekers. This, at least, has been my experience.

That our residential population should wake to possible dangers is very right, mete and proper and our bounden duty, if only this waking up be kept within decent, nay Christian bounds. Hygiene is wise and good; cowardly and insenate terror cannot be thus classified.

As a matter of fact the Mesilla Valley, taking as its central point Las Cruces, lies ready to the hand for development into a pleasure resort for wealthy tourists. But the hand is itself conspicuous by its absence. Home talent, even if by chance ambitious, is incapable of such far-seeing, wide-embracing work, and has neither the necessary experience nor the faintest idea of the up-to-the-minute tourist's demands. The Easterner in particular expects a good deal, whether he travel by rail or motor-car. A certain small community not a thousand miles distant was several years ago either exploited by outsiders or exploited itself, and now reaps a golden harvest. Its natural beauties which are not greater than those of the Mesilla Valley—indeed are in one respect inferior as it has not the attraction of a river bordered with cultivated farms--are made the most of. The large proportion of the residents take pride in their homes and one passes betwixt blooming gardens, and houses, however small, architecturally tasteful, and rests in little parks, set out with shade-trees carefully chosen for quick growth. The gravel trails which abound on all our western *mesas* are widened into fine roads, and the scenic beauties of the mountains are easily accessible either by private car or public stage. There are hotels not only run on up-to-date lines, but which please the eye within and without. This pleasing of the eye is a matter unwiseley neglected in our section, rich though it be in natural beauty. The tourist admires mountain and valley, samples the small town with its

small town outlook, shakes his head and proceeds upon his way—his way being the Borderland Route, running from El Paso and past the Elephant Butte Dam and so on and on. By this route pass numbers of overland tourists, day by day, right through our town. The eastern tourist's first cost is costly, if he is to be caught and held month after month as that other community holds him, but he *pays*—richly, full measure running over.

CHAPTER XV.

DAWN AND DARK

IT IS a very early train and high altitude nights are apt to be frosty, but we take it nevertheless so that we may have a long day in the border city. And after it is over—the aggravation of arising in the dark and eating a farcical breakfast by lamp-light—we are glad about that senselessly planned train. For we have beholding with eyes wide open the dawn and sunrise glories of earth and sky, both more daring and esoteric in winter than in summer.

We are also glad that a neighbor drives us to the station thus permitting us to snuggle into our furs while he pilots his ponies along the deserted roads. Scarcely do we speak. Speech seems out of place in this weird, unknown Valley of the Shadow. Once a voice cries softly, as if fearing to wake a sleeping child, "Look!" And—"Do you remember the sunset last night?" murmurs another. We all remember, common as those nightly pageants are.

For above the Organ Peaks lingers yet the roseeate reflection of that sunset, though now at dawn it is as if a full, wet brush of crimson lake had been drawn lightly over a background of greenish blue—the greener the colder. The eastern sky is thus tenderly dyed, whilst lower down behind the mountain range smoulder the ashes of a gigantic bonfire.

SCENE IN THE MESILLA VALLEY



Every rock and hollow clear yet ethereal, the peaks against that coppery glow rise delicately heavenward in points of silver blue.

Yet the Valley still sleeps, frostbound, shrouded, silent.

Beautiful visions come to at least one of us as our gaze seems to dip, bathe, lose itself in the beautiful sky—not all dreams as we idly term them but visions which, if not wholly of heaven are surely not all of earth—lofty aspirations, beatific flights, tinging with rose color life's duties and abnegations, bringing the unattainable within our reach, the highest within our possibilities.

Then at last the eastern fires blaze up into a lighter, brighter flame, devouring in their upward course all tenderer hues. The wide Valley assumes the garb of day, and then, joyous and dazzling, the unclouded sun springs into a sky of now vivid blue.

“The wonders of the wonderful country!”

No one replies, and in silence we drive up to the station platform and resume our mundane habits of thought; for we have many errands, not omitting those for the benefit of our friends, the health-seekers.

And on these brief forty-four mile trips to El Paso—a large and ever growing city whose boast is that it is up-to-the-minute, in all material things at least—my mind projects itself rather into the past than into present or future. Thus mentally I journey into a past so dim that I find myself in prehistoric ages, among forgotten peoples—pastoral races who irrigated this fertile Vale by ways and

means from which we have not greatly deviated, as is evidenced by the traces of irrigation plants referred to in an earlier chapter, plants destroyed undoubtedly by volcanic action. Throughout southeastern New Mexico the results of such action are widespread—said indeed by competent authorities to be the most extraordinary of their kind in the world. Volcanic dams yet discernible prove to the satisfaction of many geologists that the still wilful Rio Grande once spilled itself over the brim of the western mesa into the Mexican basin, but was forced by the above mentioned eruptions to eat its way through the rocky range to the south, thus forming the present narrow canon leading into Texas and finally to the Gulf. In our Valley are some who believe in the existence of a Lost River flowing in the depths of the earth to which it was consigned by the same tremendous upheavals. That such buried streams do exist in certain portions of New Mexico is incontrovertible.

In more recent times, driven down to the Valley of the Great River by the ruthless and predatory Athabascans, progenitors of the more modern Apaches, came representatives of comparatively peaceful and industrial races, from whom spring the Pueblos, Zunis, Queres, Pimas and other allied tribes. Many of these, however, took refuge in cave or cliff dwellings or on the summits of lofty monoliths a few hundred miles to the north of us. On one such monolith stands, inhabited by the Acomas to this day, perhaps the finest pueblo in the South West. From these high vantage grounds the

industrious nations repelled their foes, cultivated the rich lands below when permitted so to do, and in many instances came off victorious from struggles with those original robbers, for the reason that they were fore-handed after the manner of careful ranching persons and usually had a supply of food and water laid by for stormy days. And not only were they agriculturists but marvellous weavers, and unsurpassed in craftsmanship with gold and silver, which metals, together with precious stones, they knew how to extract from the earth. The Mexican of my ranching days wove artistically attractive rugs, which he brought to my door and sold at a given price per pound. But he was always careful to explain that it was he and not his Indian kinsman who was responsible for the ravishing shades of blue woven into the rugs; for the Indian regards blue as a color of ill omen. The bugbear of American Progress gobbled up this artistic industry long ago.

I see El Paso del Norte and the Valley as they were late in the eighteenth century and early in the nineteenth—just as Humboldt saw them or as described by a much more recent writer*—El Paso, a pleasant settlement, from which carriages proceeded easily up the Rio Grande Valley to Santa Fe, the capital of the Spanish Province as it is of the American State:

“The scenery was remarkable for its mountainous features and groves of cottonwood, mesquite and fresh poplars along the fertile banks of this river, which assumes great size and volume when

*Horatio O. Ladd.

filled with the melting snows of the Rocky mountains."

The same old undependable Fierce River which, ere the building of the Dam might fail us in our hour of need, leaving only its bed across which a man could walk dryshod, or rising might suddenly engulf him before he had time to cry Peccavi! Or almost as suddenly it might wash away part of El Paso and leagues of railroad, leaving hundreds of persons homeless and ourselves cut off from communication with the outside world. Still do this old river's exasperating ways remain an enigma to the stranger (unless he consult the Oldest Inhabitant, which he is not like to do), piling up sand where least expected and obliterating the labor of months.

But Humboldt's enthusiasm was unmarred, and he proceeds:

"The environs of El Paso are delicious, and resemble the finest parts of Andalusia. The fields are cultivated with maize and wheat, and the vineyards produce such excellent, sweet wines that they are even preferred to the wines of Parras in New Biscay."

The "excellent sweet wines" were the outcome of Franciscan Friars' energy and skill, when they introduced the luscious Mission grape, now like the wines sadly deteriorated in quality.

"The gardens contain in abundance all the fruits of Europe—figs, peaches, apples and pears. As

the country is very dry a canal of irrigation brings the water of the Rio del Norte to the Paso."

Thus along this broad Vale, finding smooth and easy traveling beside the Great River, the feet of bygone generations "whose bones are dust" have passed and passed again, within sight and sound of my brown ranch house—nay even perhaps through its orchards and meadows, so capricious has been the River's course.

But a few miles, too, from my ranch did the Texas Invincibles leave their wounded, to be gathered up when they returned, a draggled crew, adown the Valley of the Rio Grande. During the Civil War Texas looked confidently to New Mexico to wave the Southern flag, but the sins of her own sons—white adventurers and "bad men" from Texas—made the very name of that State an evil odor in the nostrils of both Indian and Mexican, and a sullen silence answered her appeal. Without enthusiasm but likewise without wavering the Territory retained her grasp on the skirts of the Union, and Texan dreams of conquest were forever buried in the desert sands. To this hour the New Mexican Mexican is not over fond of the Texan, though the Mexican from Mexico is apt to find himself at ease in the Lone Star State.

But the distrust of New Mexico dates further back yet—back to 1841, during the Spanish occupation when the Texans attempted to annex New Mexico. It gathered strength in the war with Mexico—that war denounced by such men as Webster, Grant and their like as "unholy, unjust and

unprovoked!" And to this day the rightful boundary between the two States is a subject of dispute, and still before the Courts. At a date not too far removed from the present to render the telling of it inapt the following incident occurred: a prominent New Mexico attorney was cross-examining a witness in a murder case. Having asked a few questions he suddenly put the one—"Where did you say you came from?" "From Texas." "That is all. You can sit down," said the lawyer. And in his argument to the jury he more than hinted that as the man came from Texas he was not trustworthy! On the other hand it may be remarked that as the Lone Star State is large enough to absorb all the New England States without winking, there is room for variety in Texans. Despite such altogether reasonable surmise, however, it was often asserted that Texan jealousy and obstinacy not only hindered the development of the Mesilla Valley but retarded the building of the Dam. El Paso wanted the Dam down the Valley instead of up, and on the Government finally deciding for itself the hatchet was perforce buried.

And now once again the present hour looms large; for we are nearing El Paso. The last of the Rockies are on the left, the ranges of Mexico on the right, and so—inaccurately enough from a topographical, geological and geographical standpoint—we are no longer in New Mexico. Here the rear-guard of the Rockies make their final stand—sentinels resting on their arms after eons of restlessness, alternating periods of volcanism and sub-

mersion by forgotten seas. At their feet throbs now the heart of a smoky modern city and a grim river pushing its way through a rockbound cañon. The pigmy, man, drives blasts into massive walls piled up by the stupendous, secret labor of the ages, and abstracts in pigmy wagons fragments of the Eternal Hills.

CORTES, who cannot well be left behind owing to an inadequate partiality for human companionship taken in the general, rises in his basket as the brakeman yells the name of the last station and vigorously shakes his collar. The brakeman grins appreciatively.

“That’s a smart little feller!” he whispers in my ear. “Always lays low this way till I call this last stop, for he knows it’s too late to put him off now!”

But the ways of Cortes, like his mysterious ancestry, are often past finding out, as are those of his son, Montezuma. Suffice it to say that he does know, not merely this relatively simple matter of stations but others hidden from our mere human vision.

His table manners are so distinguished, also as those of his son and contrary to those of the greedy and grasping Betsinda, that cafés and restaurants look the other way as he slips in and crouches at my feet. When I rise to depart from a Chinese resort a China boy hands me a package of scraps, with the smiling observation—“For the leetle dog!” Cortes recognizes furthermore the fine distinction

to be drawn between eating places, and at an American cafè accepts discreetly and mutely the morsels I "sneak" under the table, whereas he is liable to advance boldly to meet the more kindly Chinaman. For the custom of showing kindness to domestic animals was for long viewed as a weakness in this section.

By the toothpick wagging its way along the public streets do we know that the normal dinnerhour is nearly over and ours about to begin. In a private dining room off the main room in which we take our seats and await the attentions of handmaidens more importantly engaged with the other sex, some Business Man's Club is concluding its monthly luncheon. The men are typically Western, despite the probability that many of them are Easterners. Never except in the pure Gallic race may one behold such a variety of expression, such speaking countenances and gestures, as in this portion of the Far West. The Mexican is voluble and pantomimic, but his range is limited. Once in Boston I watched the elder Coquelin and another Frenchman play out a little drama in absolute silence. It was perfectly comprehensible though not a word was uttered. And now, not for the first time, such a scene is re-created for me by American business men. They talk, but what they say is inaudible at this distance. Absorbed in their own affairs they are dead to the outside world. When one beyond my range of vision speaks, the men within it lean forward, each face a separate study, tense with its individual emotions, opinions—nerves as keen as those of a

greyhound on the leash! One and all unconscious Coquelins! Clearly some plan of action was being discussed, of which approval, disapproval, enthusiasm on one side or the other occupied the entire mentality of every man present. This is the kind of transformation often effected by our Western atmosphere. Ironed out of the faces of men are restraint, neutrality, conventionality. We see the real man without the mask, and can make a pretty fair guess as to his thoughts.

Thus do I, after my manner, my companions with magazines, while away one of those tedious intervals which are the appointed lot of womankind.

THE SUN has already set when we disembark at our home station, a merry party laden with bundles suggestively feminine. Twilight broods ere we are well started, but it is not the twilight that precedes the dawn.

On the contrary, there is something in the swift on-stealing of these nights, in face of the lingering colors of the sunset sky, that has in it an element of relentlessness. Day has hushed itself beneath a dome the tint of a sparrow's egg, gilt edged where the huge orb has passed. The gray hand is once more laid upon our Valley. Cottonwoods yet retaining their November fires pale from gold to primrose. It is night; the bright day is over; we must hasten homeward.

The sombre quiet of evening brings with it at times a vague, crushing sense of finality, a nameless apprehension—the heritage, it is to be supposed, of

impressionable natures. Fortunate are they who have in such moments the comradeship of a comprehending heart; fortunate also they who have before their eyes, will they only raise them, the nightly miracle of the resurrection!

For suddenly—unexpectedly to those who know them not—the mountains flash upon the sight. This is their final and consummating hour. Battlement after battlement, peak after peak, catch the unearthly radiance. Fastnesses of pink and pearl, castles never reared by human hands—enchanted, evanescent. From the night enfolded levels we watch with suspended breath. The glory fades; already the mountains' feet wax dim. The shroud creeps up and up....

All is over, and we fly to our brown ranch house through nipping, frosty air.

CHAPTER XVI

MOUNTAINEERS

OUR New Mexican mountains present for the most part fronts built up into inaccessible precipices. On fair days—and these too numerous for the counting—the high heaven seems to have dropped fragments of its azure self into the deep clefts and hollows of the rocks, so blue are the shadows, so glittering and withal so unreal the peaks of porphyry. With that indifference peculiar to our desert scenery, so insistent that it forces reiterated emphasis and which is mitigated no whit by its orgies of color, it has looked unmoved upon every form of human struggle and suffering. Yet even to this day we raise our eyes unto the hills—to the splendid hidden heart of them, which continues to have neither part nor lot in us or our lives which endure but for a day.

And jogging valleyward on his low headed “son of the sage brush” rides the denizen of mystic peaks! Behold him and wonder! For he has as little part or lot in them as they in him.

In memory we return to the soft tree-clothed heights of the Virginia Blue Ridge ranging in altitude to some 6000 feet above sea level, thus leaving off at a point where the mountains of New Mexico start; for the average elevation of this State is around 5000 to 6000 feet. The narrow, broken val-

leys of the Blue Ridge—inhabited, and cultivated in so far as the often exhausted soil permits—have nothing in common with the broad, fertile vales of Southern New Mexico. And not only the valleys but those rounded Virginia mountains wear an air of peace and home, of neighborliness, to which our Western mountains make no claim, or ever will if Nature has her way. The woods upon the Blue Ridge glow with the colors of the Fall, fold about them during the brief winters veils of rich and varied brown, and in the Springtime toss silvery stars of dogwood to the gentle, exquisite sky. The leafy masses are spaced with verdant pastures, or streaked in their descent toward the valleys with the crimson ribbons of Virginia roads. And yet—down from these peaceful, homelike heights rides a “dark complected” silent person, his black slouch hat pulled over his brows, his family following—two, or maybe three, of them to a horse—the woman probably smoking a corncob pipe in the depths of a black sunbonnet, and the little towheads staring at the stranger with eyes for whose forget-me-not blue neither of the parents appear to be responsible.

Thus rides a man of mystery from the seemingly kind heart of the Blue Ridge.

Yet even as the Virginia mountains secrete rocky dens in their sheltering woods—to which woods many a time we have climbed, carrying lunches tied to our saddles, perpendicular ascents meaning nothing to a Virginia bred horse—so does her man of mystery expand on occasion—to some congenial stranger, eager to take potluck with his host in a

rude log cabin so that he may whip the mountain streams for trout. To this type of "furriner," as the mountaineer dubs him, the host will hold forth lengthily over the chip fire at night or under the stars, thus furnishing much racy material to the auditor capable of appreciating and remembering it. The mountaineer of the South is himself, and only himself—"different," as the saying is.

Not so the South Western mountaineer, though he has his points. But the types have little in common. The Southerner, no matter how poor or plain, will enthuse at the sight of a blooded horse. Innumerable times have I reined in my thoroughbred mare on some lonely woodland road that a man driving a sorry team to an old wagon may get down and go over her exhaustively and judicially, discuss every detail and demand her pedigree while handling her with positive adoration. "Howdy, Mam!" was the usual greeting. "Whah' you buy that fine mah'?" The passion for a good horse is a passion with every trueborn Virginian, having its origin probably in his English ancestry and fostered by the old-time planters, whose constant custom it was to import thoroughbreds and from such noble stock build up strains of their own, each strain named for the plantation responsible for it. The Western mountaineer would look on such foolishness with contempt, and boast himself solely on the utility of the uncomely beast that drags or carries him sixty or so miles per diem, as also on its ability to endure hardship or even ill usage. Good blood has no appeal for him, and his horse eye is conspicuous

by its absence. Yet even as regards ordinary utility I myself have known highbred Virginia horses who could "hit the long trail and keep a-goin'" as tirelessly as any cow pony of them all, and that too through bottomless Virginia mud such as is never encountered on the mountain trails of New Mexico.

As for matching mountain ideas of honesty—both are peculiar to themselves. For instance: we, together with our Virginian neighbors, found it impossible to turn our premium winning sheep out to graze in the mountains, even though much of the said pasture was our own property. The mountain people held tenaciously to the opinion that pedigreed sheep were as other sheep—just mutton. Consequently the mountaineers killed and ate them. Yet here follows another Blue Ridge incident, equally typical and veracious: a man from the valleys met a mountaineer driving a fat steer, and expressed a wish to buy the animal, but added that he had not the purchase price in his pocket.

"Best carry the critter right along now," quoth the owner.

"But I don't have a dollar on me."

"Wa-a-l,"—indifferently—"that ain't nothin' to worry over. Carry the critter home, and some day when you-all's ridin' this-er way, set the money in that thar holler tree."

"But someone else may get it!"

"Tech anythin' as belongs to me?"—this with scorn inexpressible—"No, siree-Bob! We-all ain't acquainted with sech lowdown, ornery ways o' doin'!"

You set the money thar, an' it'll stay till I git ready to come after hit."

I wish that it were possible to relate some of my personal experiences with our South Western mountaineers; for though commonly accounted lawless such experiences would be a bit astonishing to their detractors. Such scraps of local history, however, might prove tiresome to "furrin'" readers. Suffice it to say that in all my dealings with mountaineers, come down to the Valley for purposes of their own, I encountered nothing but the strictest honesty, and even in one special emergency genuine chivalry. The emergency was such that friends in town begged me, almost with tears, to leave my ranch, part of the house being occupied by a mountain family and temporary cowboy visitors, and seek safety with them. I declined the invitation, asserting that no matter what might happen—and things *were* happening at that juncture—I had never felt so secure, so well protected, in my usually unprotected existence. These mountaineers might be under suspicion—the story is too long to relate here—but, rough and unlettered though they were, I had received at their hands such chivalrous treatment, such genuine courtesy as could not be excelled, possibly not matched, elsewhere in that section. The sequel proved that I was not mistaken; I slept that night without fear, and my confidence was more than justified.

In a sense, however, our mountaineers are undoubtedly lawless. They do not, like the Southern mountain people, hold grudges from one generation

to another, and when they commit murder do so for what appears to them lawful and sufficient reason. In any case, homicides are all too frequent throughout these United States and too rarely punished. But the mountaineers pursue a course of their own in the customary evasion of the law, and when sheriffs are sent after them they stand together to a man, cattlemen included, and if they do decide to give themselves up it is with the serene consciousness that no mountain witness will be found to testify against them!

Were we to pursue those ethereally blue shadows on our porphyry mountains to their deepest depths, we should find that many of them are formed by cañon diving into the apparently uninhabited steeps—some green with wild grasses and oats, and tinkling with tiny streams from which the casually industrious mountaineer irrigates his crop patches of potatoes or the like, and timbered with cedar, pinon, juniper, and ash trees of various kinds. In such pockets the intermittent labor of the mountain man reaps reward in harmony with his sense of the fitness of things. Where the streams are larger he erects saw mills and becomes prosperous, also in accordance with his simple requirements. Further north the woods transform themselves into forests, filled with game—often also bear and mountain lion—for the diversion of the hunter, and the mountain creeks furnish sport for the lover of the rod and fly. As time goes on, more and more of “the tired business man” species from eastern cities will discover the enchantments and diversions of the New

Mexican mountains. Cludcroft, a New Mexican resort nearly 10,000 feet above the sea, with its mountain climbing railroad, magnificent views unhampered by fogs, fine timber and masses of wild flowers, is already dotted with the summer homes of El Paso people and offers hotels and boarding houses for the entertainment of the more distant visitor from other sections.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HIGH RANGES

"If thou wouldest read a lesson, that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the hills!—"

WHEN I abandon my seat at the wheel of my roadster in favor of R, I feel that I am out for the Great Adventure, perhaps because he is so young. Therefore when one winter Sunday, immediately after midday dinner he called up to know if I would like to take "a little drive" I was a wee bit disappointed. No "little drive" for me!

We started, both in our "go-to-meetings," anticipating no adventure. Up, up we bowled, rounding the curves of the excellent if somewhat dangerous road modern ingenuity has constructed up the mesa, then spinning along the trail past our favorite haunt where grow the *amoles*. But today we do not pause to burn out possible rattlesnakes hibernating in dead and fallen soapweed so that I may say that at the long last I have beheld a rattler in the flesh—and maybe they are all out walking in the balmy sunshine.

On, on, the Valley on our left, the Doña Ana mountains ahead and on our right the blue Organs streaked with glittering snow. We arrive at the first gate of the 250,000 acre cattle range, and give

the car a chance to breathe; for it has been a long pull and a strong pull. Here we sit, both of us content to revel in the beauty of the land we love, to watch the changeful mountains, sometimes talking, more often silent, listening to the murmur of the scarcely perceptible wind in the tall grass of these wide and solitary places.

At length the spirit of adventure starts to swell within my breast.

"How far is it to the home ranch?" I inquire.

"About seventeen miles further."

"Well, let's go on! Jump out and open the gate and I'll drive through."

This feat accomplished and my chauffeur once more at the wheel his spirit too begins to rise.

"I tell you what we'll do—we'll go around the mountain instead!"—the mountain being the huge "tumble of rocks" yclept the Doña Ana thrown up by volcanic action from the Valley beneath and the "bald prairie" above—"It's a long way round and I don't remember the trail very well but will you take chances?"

Would I!

"Well then," pointing to an interminable line of telephone poles walking off into the unseen, "We must go on five or six miles to the first spring and ask the cowboy there which road to follow. It must be one of these trails to the west and we shall be obliged to come back on our tracks."

And while we fly upon our way, opening more gates and meeting the ranch manager driving his family to town, R. explains that the so-called

springs on the range, six in number, are in reality wells, dug at great expense and equipped with pumping plants. At each spring dwells a cowboy in a tent. No longer does he ride the range, except on special occasions such as rounding up for shipping and so forth, for the range is fenced both within and without and it is the business of the fence rider to care for the fences. The tent cowboy looks after and waters the stock inside his special domain, between which and that of his fellow several miles intervene.

At last we come to the first spring. Some Texas longhorns are standing around awaiting the local market, tough stuff we unhappy locals are destined to chew on, but the man in charge must be occupied with the bunch of Durhams we descry penned in a corral further on, for his cozy tent is empty. The thoroughbreds, needless to add, are intended for our eastern betters; the day is at hand, however, when the Valley dwellers will arise in their might and demand their rights as human beings.

R. hunts up the cowboy, and returns with the information that the trail does in truth go around the mountain.

Back we go, therefore, opening all gates again with the exception of that in the line fence, and then turning sharp west plunge into an up grade trail whose ruts are worn so deep that it is a gamble whether or no the fenders will clear the high places. They do clear, and so do we emerge triumphant from abysmal gullies criss-crossing our toil-

some route; but this has been one of the times when I leave my chauffeur to his reflections.

The range on either side of us is dotted now with stunted trees and bushes, and from out of one, almost within handclasp, flits a mountain wren from her nest.

"A nest in the first week of February!" I exclaim.

"Yes. At this altitude, six to seven thousand feet above sea-level, the birds keep house most of the year. And look at the house!"

A home nest in very truth! Roofed and walled snugly, with just a bit of a door for a bit of a bird!

Gradually we approach the tremendous wall of rock which marks the eastern limit of "the mountain."

"Why is the shadow on it so velvety? Shadows here are generally so sharp and distinct."

"Wait, and you will see why," enjoins my chauffeur.

I wait and I do see; for when we come to a halt and look upward to the purple softness of it I perceive that its sheer face is clothed with desert growths—dwarf cedars, Spanish Daggers, grease-wood and bunches of gramma grass, and so far as mortal eye can discern not an ounce of soil to support this vegetation. And right in the heart of this overwhelming "tumble of rocks" nestles, my chauffeur tells me, a green glade, real grass and a living spring—one, and perhaps more, of such surprises. But it, or they, is far and hard to seek and find, for in the desert country Nature guards her secrets jealously.

We turn, and look back—eastward. The great range swings its thousands of acres down the long slope to the feet of the Organ and San Andreas mountains—a shimmering sea, here golden, there silver or pale amber, according as the sunlight strikes or the soil is moist or dry. A vast, silent sea! Yet eloquent enough to those who have ears whereabouts to hear.

We move forward again, closer still to the giant cliff which begins to show its northern edge serrated like a saw—a grim volcanic rock setting off to advantage the delicate, sunlit background of plain and mountain—the colorful New Mexican landscape which mocks at cameras, eternally changing, invisible clouds trailing over it phantom shadows—violet, purple, heliotrope, pale lavender and cobalt! Whence come they? Whither go they? And all this beneath a sky the hue of a sapphire!

We pass through a gate in the line fence and find ourselves on another cattle ranch. The trail down which we swoop leads east once more instead of west. We are not going around the mountain—distinctly *not*. Mildly I comment on this fact.

“Don’t worry!” Thus adjures my chauffeur. “It will be all right. You see!”

Worry? I’m not worrying.

Presently we come to the home ranch. No one at home, doors and windows closed. Modern facilities have done away with the hermit life for cattle-men and their families. A bunch of young stock lines up to bar our course, blood in every individual

eye. The car hums steadily into their ranks and one and all take to their heels.

"Yes, you'd better beat it!"

Now where are we? The cattle have tramped the trail into nothingness.

"Watch me!" says my chauffeur.

I watch him. He describes a wide circle with the car, then darts like a swallow into a trail at first invisible to me but soon developing into a grand natural road, down which we fly at some forty miles an hour.

"Isn't this fine!" he cries. It is very fine, its sole drawback being that it runs away from the mountain instead of passing around it. But I sit back and take the goods the gods provide.

Presently I note symptoms indicating that R. is none too sure of the route, and he begins to discuss possibilities—that we may, for instance, find it desirable to take in the Elephant Butte Dam, or even run on to Albuquerque, an afternoon drive of perhaps two hundred miles. But the fun of the game possesses us both, and we don't seem to care much.

Far ahead another home ranch and a new range loom up and a distant line of telephone poles, and then of a sudden a Borderland Route post leaps up alongside. "Whoa!" is the word, down goes the brake and we reverse to read the lettering on the white post. The backward finger points south and reads, "Las Cruces—El Paso." The one pointing north concerns us no wit, for it suggests the end of the earth.

"I was told we'd have to go north for several

miles before turning," observes my chauffeur, as he deftly swings the car around the arrowhead and plunges south. "Now we're on the old Santa Fè Trail."

Wellnigh bottomless are the tracks made by the wheels of those prairie schooners of the sturdy pioneers, but the going is fair, and for awhile our conversation lingers with those toiling wagons and the thrills of a vanished past absorb us. We behold war-painted Indians dashing out from the shelter of arroyos and buttes, and feel to our inmost souls the solitariness of immense unpeopled spaces. We dream backward only to the early eighties when the railroad down the Valley was completed. In imagination, too, we share the relief and joy of the old-timers on catching sight of U. S. Troopers hurrying to the rescue from Fort Selden in the Valley. Travelers then by stage or wagon had scant time to bestow on the glory and beauty of the high ranges; their business was to press on to the Fort, or to Old Mesilla some nineteen miles further south. The Old Santa Fè Trail was a warpath in bloody earnest, whether it led across high range or desert, or penetrated timber clad walls of rocky canons in whose depths strove together not only white man and Indian but Federal and Confederate, American and Mexican.

As we start to climb I hold my peace, for now are we verily up against it, and Don't-speak-to-the-chauffeur becomes the part of wisdom. This is work, not play, for both driver and car.

We worm our upward way, in and out, through sand to the hubs—heartbreaking sand!

"How would you like to camp up here?" R. says abruptly.

"Not bad," I retort by way of encouragement.

"Warm enough now, but we'd freeze at night!" And he speaks no more for a long time. Once in a while I steal a glance at him; he looks somewhat careworn, though the car grinds steadily on.

"Pull, *pull*, little old car!" I break forth at last.
"Earn your keep!"

But criticism, even of the faintest, is not acceptable.

"It *will*. Don't worry about *this* car!"

It does. We top the crest of the long ascent, and with a shout my chauffeur hails the telephone poles now close at hand.

"That's the Government road!" Now we're all right!"

Which goes to prove that we have not always been all right.

And it is a road indeed, worthy of the great gods! Away we go, down, down into the Valley, rounding the corners exhilaratingly—all is smooth sailing.

"Let's coast!" I rashly cry.

He mutters something and we coast. It is heaven—until it is not, and we skid with haste and some display of violence. A poor driver would have sent us into the abyss below, but things being as they are I remain calm and unmoved. My present chauffeur might conduct me up and down a precipice, and I should remain ever calm.

"Just what I expected!" he growls, and feeds the gas again.

On, on, we rush, and alight in the Valley alongside the Leasburg Diversion Dam on the river, lake and western mesa brooding violet blue in the late afternoon sun. We are yet seventeen miles north of Las Cruces, but what is that after our extensive wanderings? We race along the level, passing ruined Fort Selden, our souls filled with scorn for the humdrum Sunday outing folks, content to prowl in their cars through the settled agricultural bottomlands, while we have been exploring the wilds and heights. One after another we hoot at the flivvers and pass them by.

"Prythee why so fast?" I inquire. "We are short of gas, and think how humiliating it would be if a Tin Lizard overtook us and we had to plead with it for food!"

"That's why I'm making time," is the retort. "I'm going to get back before the gas gives out!"

Which he does—just! As we slow down at the door the indicator on the tank marks only a hairs-breadth from O.

But we had made sixty-five joyful miles on our "little afternoon drive."

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

CROSSING THE DESERT

STILL—silent—as a world abandoned in the fullness of its summer prime!

For the boundless plains—sliding into the distance like emerald waves doomed never to break on any mortal shore, and uplifting here and there carpets of flowers no mortal will ever cull—breathe the very essence of life. Renewed and cleansed by the fire and fury of midsummer storms neither death nor decay has part or lot in them. The mountain ranges, split as they soar heavenward into fantastic shapes, glow like jewels dropped from the Book of Revelations by the Hand that knows not time but eternity.

To the imagination awed by the solemnity of the infinite a pillar of dust, created by some mimic whirlwind and reddened by the westering sun, walks as a pillar of fire, and involuntarily the ear attunes itself to the sound of the Still, Small Voice.

Gazing from the window of the railroad car some shining winter day we note the tiny tracks upon the sand of the unpeopled country, tracks of tiny creatures busied each upon his own life's quest, and once more the spell is upon us. We would that we could say with Fabre: Tell of the intimate terms on which I live with you, of the patience with which I record

your actions. We would that for us it were possible, as for another desert lover, to pass weeks alone beneath those jewelled peaks, and to have given to the world as he has the story of the desert's teeming life, its mysterious ways, its enveloping silences. The jangle of voices around us, the commonplaces of barrenness and monotony, are but as the crackling of thorns under a pot. And the gates of the soul open wide that the Spirit of the Desert may enter in, there to abide for all time: to illumine the darkness of troubled nights, to create stillness in the centre of life's driving storm, and to bestow the peace which passeth understanding when the cry of the Human, without and within, urges too fiercely.

For it is good that man should sometimes tarry far from the world that is too much with him, in the immense solitudes of God's country. As Christ went up into the mountain to pray so it is well that we should go out into a desert place alone, and there pressed close to Nature's breast, even were she never so aloof and self sufficing, watch and listen and commune with our own hearts, and be still.

And thus it might be that at the long last all things would be made plain.

The radiant day draws to its close. There, upon the battlemented horizon where for uncounted ages he has rested in his passing, the sun lingers now, bidding farewell to the serried hosts which all day long followed him in invisible array from the hither brim to the further of the earth's cup. Now flaming in coats of many colors they range themselves above

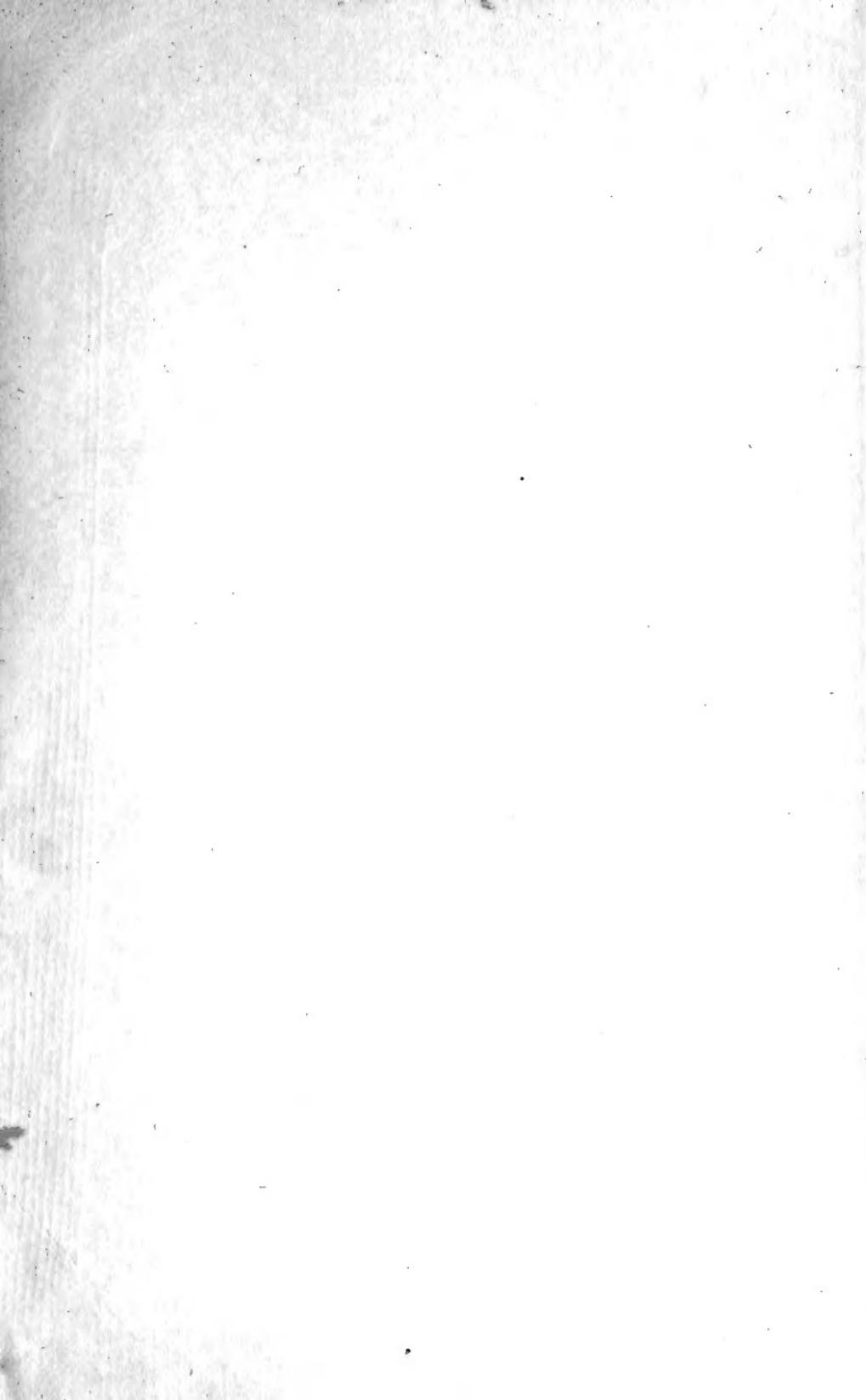
his sinking head, their rainbowed-hued pennants fluttering across high heaven. A moment more and he is gone. The rainbow hues gradually, very gradually, fade. The sky's deep sapphire melts into the blue that elsewhere never is o'er land or sea. The vast plain darkens. Day is dead.

And then it is that in "the wonderful country" the miracle of resurrection may be seen by those that have eyes to see. Slowly an amber light steals up from the horizon, touches with unearthly finger every bush and sand-hill upon the illimitable rolling plain, then as slowly withdraws its radiance, and concentrating behind the mountains burns and deepens until the whole west is as the glowing embers of some mighty conflagration.

Time passes. Then, hurriedly as it were, night slips her translucent mantle pierced by a myriad stars over earth and heaven. All is over.

Once in the clear small hours we look forth again, whilst like some blustering invader our train roars through the starlit mysteries and silences of the Unknown Land. Undisturbed by our coming, indifferent to our going, sphynx-like still the Desert broods upon her voiceless wastes, her pyramids and towers. But her spirit, the Spirit of the Great Desert, has entered in. It is ours for all time.





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